A PERSWASIVE TO Peace and Unity AMONG CHRISTIANS,

Notwithstanding their different Apprehensions in lesser things.

The Second Edition much Enlarged by way of PREFACE.

Rom. 14. 19. *Let us therefore follow after the things which make for Peace, and things wherewith one may edifie another.*

By *W. A.*

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THE PREFACE TO

Such *Readers* as are in any publick capacity of restoring Peace to our Church, and to the Dissenters also.

THIS I take for an undoubted Truth; That the Peace of the Church depends upon scarce any thing so much under God, as upon the prudent management of Ecclesiastical affairs relating thereto, by them that have the publick conduct of them. Supposing which, and supposing also the Peace of our Church to be in a great measure lost; there are none more concern'd to enquire into the reason of it than they who are in that publick capacity. Nor are any

more concern'd to ſtudy and to find out fitting remedies for the cure of this great diſtemper, and to apply them, than they are, for that none are in ſuch a capacity of doing it as they. Thoſe doubtleſs owe more to the Peace of the Church than others, who have more ability and greater opportunities than others to promote it. All this I take for granted.

Now more I think need not be ſaid than has been ſaid, and that abundantly and by many, to evince both the neceſſity and utility of Peace and Unity in the Church, and the miſchief of diviſion, ſtrife, and contention. And although both the parties divided ſeem to be full of the ſenſe of all this, yet we find by ſad experience, how little all that hath been ſaid, and all that hath been done, hath prevailed towards the cure of this great and threatning diſtemper, thus long predominant among us. What then? Muſt we ſit down in deſpair, and give up our Church in this Nation as incurable? Or is there no remedy unleſs God will work a Miracle

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to effect it? Has all been done that can safely be done to restore Peace to our Church? It is doubtless a thing most worthy our Superiours serious consideration, whether or no they have done all that they in honour and prudence can do towards so necessary and desirable a work.

Is the dissenting party weak, or are they wayward in that they have not complied with those terms of Peace which our Superiours have thought fit to appoint? Suppose they have been so: yet their not paying what they owe to the Peace of the Church and what depends thereon, does not discharge our debt on the other hand, nor do we owe any whit the less to the Peace of the Church, and the honour and safety of Religion and success of the Gospel which depends very much upon that Peace. The Peace and flourishing estate of the Church is a matter of that huge moment, that for the sake of it, if not for their sake who disturb that Peace; those that have Power should do any thing they can

without wrong to our holy Religion, to put an end to our dishonourable and uncomfortable contentions, and the many very bad effects that are consequent upon them. And when they find by long experience that one method will not do it, why should it be grievous to them to make use of another, until they find out one that will? God himself did not think it unbecoming his wisdom to evacuate and make void his own institutions when circumstances rendred others more accommodate and more proportionate to his end, though they had been of use for many Ages before. There is verily a disannulling of the Commandment going before, for the unprofitableness of it, *saith the divine Author to the Hebrews. And again,* he taketh away the first that he may establish the second, *saith the same Author. The alteration of times, circumstances, and temper of the people, are thought a sufficient reason to make alteration in the Civil Government, though not of the Government it self: and why may it*

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not be so in the Ecclesiastical in reference to those things which are indifferent and alterable in their own nature? When the reason of usages is altered, it cannot be unreasonable to make alteration in the usages themselves. That which was a reason of retaining some things in the beginning of the Reformation, may be a reason now of laying them aside; and that is for the better bringing people to Church.

And if our Superiours shall think fit to make use of this remedy when we have such small hopes in any other without this, as we seem to have; they will thereby have the honour and the satisfaction of having done what in them lies to heal the Churches wounds, and to remove the suspicion of blame from themselves. And when ever they shall resolve to try this, they have great reason to promise themselves success in it if managed as it may be, by removing the principal occasion of our divisions; for where there is no Wood the fire goeth out, as the wise man long since observed.

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If it ſhall be thought that it will not ſtand with the honour of our Superiours ſo far to condeſcend to the humours or the ſcruples of thoſe from whom they might expect obedience; yet it may be conſidered, that though they cannot think them worthy of it, yet the Churches Peace thereby to be ſought is worthy of it, if by that means it may be obtained: and it is not meet that ſhould be neglected for the ſake of any mens unworthineſs whatſoever. There is no good Chriſtian how great ſoever he may be, can think it any diminution to his honour, to ſerve the Churches Intereſt, to which we all owe even our very Lives. What though this cannot be done perhaps without ſome regret in regard of that diſturbance which has been occaſioned by them? yet the good which in great probability they may do to them, and to the whole Church by procuring its Peace by ſuch their condeſcenſion, is matter of far more weight and moment, than the gratifying their own will in the contrary, and matter of more honour

nour too. For in doing thus, they will have both the honour and the comfort of treading in the ſteps and imitating the example of the great Lord and Maſter of us all, Chriſt Jeſus, and of his Apoſtles: a thing worthy the ambition of the higheſt among Chriſtians. We then that are ſtrong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to pleaſe our ſelves; for even Chriſt pleaſed not himſelf, *ſaith St.* Paul. *And St.* Paul *whoſe Chriſtian behaviour hath procured him renown through the whole Chriſtian World, propoſeth his own example thus to all high and low*; even as I pleaſe all men in all things, not ſeeking mine own profit, but the profit of many. *Beſides, the more eminent any is in the Church, the more he is obliged thereby to be ſerviceable to them that are beneath him in it, at what diſtance ſoever circumſtances have ſet them; becauſe he hath that eminency for that very end.* Whoſoever, *ſaith our Saviour*, will be great among you, ſhall be your Miniſter: and whoſoever

ever of you will be the chiefeſt, ſhall be the ſervant of all. Even as I came (*ſaith he*) not to be miniſtred unto, but to miniſter. *Theſe laſt words open the meaning of the former, which do intimate, that ſuch is the nature and deſigned end of eminency and precedency in the Church of Chriſt, that whoever deſires to be chief there, deſires the greateſt burden; that is, of being ſerviceable to all the reſt ſo far as his capacity will extend: even as our Lord the greateſt of all,* was among his as one that ſerveth, *as he himſelf ſaith. Beſides, if by ſuch a condeſcenſion any ſhall obtain to be called the* Repairers of the breach, *eſpecially of one ſo great as is made in our Church, it will be an honour ſo great, as may well make the higheſt among Chriſtians ambitious of it.*

In order to peace-making, it is worthy the impartial conſideration of our Superiours, whether it can be duly thought that the Church is like to receive more benefit by continuing thoſe things

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in the Church without alteration which are supposed to be the occasion of the wide breach that is in it; though the breach be continued thereby; or by a procuring Peace and Unity in the Church by removing some of them, and by an easy alteration in some other: Or whether the Church is like to receive more hurt by such an alteration, than it does by our divisions for want of it. For I doubt not but the prospect of profit or loss in this case ought to determine their resolution in whom is the power. Now the things about which our differences have principally risen, are granted by our Church to be but indifferent in their own nature, and alterable when ever the Church sees occasion: but so is not the Peace of the Church and what depends thereon. God has no where commanded Church Governours to impose the one, but has commanded them and all others to follow after the things that make for Peace, and to endeavour to keep the Unity of the Spirit in the bond of Peace. Had

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the one been as useful and beneficial to the Church as the other, there's no question but the one would have been as expressly commanded as the other. The one may be lawful, but cannot be so necessary, because not so beneficial as the other. All things considered then, it is highly probable at least that we shall not be set further from Peace by such an alteration, but be brought much nearer to it if not in full possession of it: however that the gain will be more one way than the loss can be another; and if so, that's enough to turn the scale of resolution. Since then some things which have been imposed with an intent to preserve Peace, Unity, and good order in the Church, have produced the contrary effect; that Peace, Unity, and good order seem to call loudly for some relaxation in these things.

Two things seem very necessary for the preservation of the Church in Peace: the one respecting the terms of entring into the Ministry and Communion of the Church; the other the due exercise of

of Diſcipline. As touching the Miniſtry, two things ſeem neceſſary in order to Peace. The one that ſuch as are admitted into the Miniſtry, be duly qualified for it, to the end the people may be under no temptation of leaving them upon account of their inſufficiency, and ſo ſet up others in more private aſſemblies. For experience ſhews, that the failure of Miniſters, either in reſpect of gifts or a good life, has in many places greatly tended to multiply Diſſenters, and to divide the Church. For when all is otherwiſe done that can be done, it will be a difficult thing to confine men to attend an inſufficient Miniſtry wherein the intereſt of their Souls is ſo much concerned as they will apprehend it to be: that's one thing. Another is, that nothing be required of them as a condition of entrance into the Miniſtry, that is of doubtful interpretation, or apt to create doubts and ſcruples, and but only ſuch which every good man though otherwiſe nice and ſcrupulous, may without heſitation ſubmit unto. And the reaſon

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hereof is, because by this means that pretence will be taken away, of the necessity of exercising their gifts and function in separate Congregations, for that the terms of obtaining the publick allowance are such, as they cannot with satisfaction of Conscience submit to. This tenderness seems the more necessary to preserve Peace and Order, because when men of Ministerial education and abilities have that to pretend, that the terms of taking upon them the publick Ministry, are such as they cannot comply with and keep a good Conscience; many well meaning people, partly out of pity to them, and partly out of an opinion that they are men of more tenderness than others, will be, as we see they are, apt to follow them, by which they are and will be encouraged to set up separate Congregations. The Peace of the Church depends much upon the ease of the Ministers minds in reference to the terms put upon them in their Ministration; because the satisfaction of the peoples minds, depends mostly upon the satisfaction

faction of such Ministers as they most affect.

Then as concerning the people, the Peace of the Church depends very much upon the unexceptionableness of the terms of their Communion in the publick worship. And therefore in order to the preservation of this Peace, it seems necessary that care be taken to decline as much as may be, the imposing under penalties, the use of such circumstances in publick worship as are apt to create doubts and scruples in the weaker sort: and to follow the plainest general rules in Scripture relating to publick worship, and the example of the Primitive Church in the purest times; which must needs tend most to general satisfaction both of the weak and strong, and to the holding them together in Peace and Love. The weak in the Faith should not be troubled with matters of doubtful disputation, especially in the publick worship, to avoid a breach and to preserve Peace. Many things may be lawful in the publick worship, which yet for

Peace ſake may not be convenient to be impoſed, as that of kneeling at the Sacrament for inſtance. The things that make both for Peace and Edification, are to be followed as in other things, ſo eſpecially in the publick Worſhip. Our bleſſed Saviour in his Doctrine had reſpect to what his Diſciples were able to bear, leſt otherwiſe they ſhould be ſcandalized at his Doctrine: and the ſame rule, and for the like reaſon, would be obſerved in things relating to the publick worſhip.

As touching the Diſcipline of the Church in relation to Peace, ſpecial care would be taken ſo to exerciſe and manage it, as that it may beſt attain this end and not hinder it. To this purpoſe it may be conſidered, whether to uſe the ſeverity of Diſcipline for doing or omitting to do things neither good nor evil in their own nature, antecedent to that humane authority which forbids or commands them, does not tend more to hinder than to ſecure the Peace of the Church. And whether it does not

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more hinder than further the Peace of the Church to use the severity of Discipline upon persons otherwise innocent and peaceable, for their non-compliance with some Injunctions of the Church, when such their non-compliance proceeds only from scruple of Conscience, and want of satisfaction in their own minds touching the lawfulness of what is required, though in it self and in the judgment of wiser men, it should be lawful. For such severity towards such persons, when otherwise well meaning, creats a prejudice in their minds against that Church from which they find such usage, and becomes a temptation to them to withdraw themselves from it, and to fall in with others of their mind. For in this case they will look upon themselves as persecuted for endeavouring to please God in not acting against Conscience, and be apt to conclude it a sufficient ground of their separation as driven away. Whereas if such were indulgently dealt withal and tolerated in their different persuasion, as suppose for

inſtance, in their not kneeling at the Sacrament, or the like, they might be brought in time to be better informed, as many by that means have been; or however the Peace of the Church would be thereby better preſerved, and ſeparation prevented. For ſuch little differences in the opinion and practice of perſons in Communion in the ſame Church, may well enough conſiſt with the Peace of the Church ſo long as they agree in the ſubſtantials of the Chriſtian Religion. The difference between the believing Jews and the believing Gentiles, about meats, and days, and Circumciſion, were far greater than many if not than any of our differences in the circumſtances of worſhip: and yet they were to bear with one another in that difference, and not to divide in Communion about it, nor rigidly to impoſe their different ſentiments and practice upon each other. And is it not great pity that ſo excellent an Apoſtolical Canon as this (Rom. 14. Acts 15.) *ſhould be overlookt in Eccleſiaſtical Conſtitutions, and that the*

Church

Church ſhould ſuffer ſo much in its want of Peace, as it has done for want of obſerving this?

But beſides, this ſeverity of Diſcipline about things indifferent or not neceſſary in their own nature or of divine inſtitution, hinders the Peace of the Church, and perhaps the purity of it too, by rendering the cenſures of the Church leſs auguſt and leſs regarded. For when men come to be Excommunicated for not obſerving ſome little things which are confeſſed not neceſſary in their own nature, and which yet they really ſcruple; their Conſciences are not at all affected with the Cenſures of the Church in this Caſe, as they would be if it were for ſuch notorious crimes as for which, and not for leſs than which, Excommunication was inflicted in the Primitive Church. And if the Conſcience be not affected with it, as believing they have not deſerved it, they will take themſelves but wronged thereby, and be ſo far from being brought more to reverence the Government, as that their

minds and affections will be more alienated from it, and from the Church for the ſake of it, as experience hath abundantly ſhewed. And when Excommunication is made ſo common as to be inflicted for matters of doubtful diſputation as well as for ſcandalous offences and groſs immoralities, if not rather and more frequently for thoſe than for theſe; the efficacy and authority of the Churches Cenſures is thereby weakned in the minds not only of the leſſer offenders, but of the greater alſo, who will ſoon learn from the other to make no great matter of Excommunication further than as it is expenſive to them, the ſhame of their Excommunication being much leſſened in their ſenſe, as being nothing but what they ſee is inflicted on other men, who do not take themſelves at all diſgraced thereby. Now the Cenſures of the Church are as a guard to it, to ſecure both its Peace and Purity: and therefore by how much the authority and dread of theſe is weakened by any miſapplication of them, by ſo much is

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both the Peace and Purity of the Church xpoſed to ſuffer. When the nature and degree of Church correction is diſproportionate to the nature of the offence, as when made as heavy for the leaſt or leſſer offences as for the greateſt; it is very apt to diſcourage and provoke the ſufferer, and to do him more hurt than good: to diſcourage him in the way of willing and chearful obedience, and to provoke him to caſt off the care of duty. Fathers provoke not your Children, leſt they be diſcouraged, *ſaith S.* Paul. *If too much ſeverity in Fathers to their Children will produce this ill effect; it is no wiſe likely to have a better effect, when the like is uſed by Superiours to Inferiours in the Church.*

The Government of the Church is the Government of Chriſt, when it is managed according to his mind and direction: and his Government is a mild and gentle Government: His Yoke is eaſie and his burden light. *His Diſciples* fulfil his Law when they bear one anothers burdens, *and do what*

they can to eaſe one another: but to burden one another unneceſſarily, and with burdens which he has not laid upon them, is doubtleſs another thing than the fulfilling the Law of Chriſt. The weaker any Chriſtians are, the more gently and tenderly they ſhould be dealt withal, leſt that which is lame be turned out of the way, *as the Apoſtle's phraſe is. Thoſe that are diſeaſed and would be well if they could, are not to be beaten becauſe they are not: no more are they that are of weak minds becauſe they are no ſtronger, but ſcruple that which thoſe of ſounder judgments do not, nor would they if they knew how to help it.* We were gentle among you even as a nurſe cheriſheth her Children, *ſaith St.* Paul: *and that muſt needs be with a great deal of care and tenderneſs, and with a patient enduring of ſome frowardneſs alſo.*

For my part I doubt not in the leaſt but that Chriſtian forbearance and not Church Cenſures, is to be uſed towards all that profeſs belief of ſo much of the Chriſtian

Chriſtian Doctrine as is neceſſary to Salvation, and do not contradict it by a wicked Life, how many and how great ſoever their differences among themſelves in leſſer matters may otherwiſe be. And this forbearance is to be uſed for that very reaſon, becauſe it is a proper means of keeping the unity of the ſpirit in the bond of peace. For ſo I underſtand thoſe words of St. Paul *taken together, when he ſayes:* With all lowlineſs and meekneſs, with long-ſuffering, forbearing one another in love; endeavouring to keep the unity of the ſpirit in the bond of peace. *That is, I conceive, endeavouring thereby to keep the unity of the ſpirit in the bond of peace, to wit, by lowlineſs and meekneſs, by long-ſuffering, and by forbearing one another in love. For otherwiſe conſidering the different apprehenſions and ſentiments, the different tempers and great defects and imperfections that ever have been and are like to be among men in the Church; it is impoſſible to keep them all in peace in the ſame*

ſame Church without this forbearance: without this they will certainly fall in pieces, of which we need no other proof than experience. And there is no ſuch way not only of keeping peace, but alſo of reconciling the weak to the ſtrong in their opinions and apprehenſions, and the peeviſh and the froward to the lowly and meek in their affections and goodneſs of deportment, as by long-ſuffering and forbearing them in love; in conjunction with meek and loving applications to them. The body the Church, as St. Paul *notes, does* edifie it ſelf in love: *it is increaſed and beſt built up in that way. Thoſe applications in Church Rulers which favour moſt of love to the weaker ſort, and ſuch as are in moſt danger of dividing, are of all other the moſt effectual to bind them faſter to the Church and to their duty in it:* for love is the bond of perfectneſs, *as the Apoſtle calls it. And where this way of dealing will beſt reach the Churches end, it's pity any other ſhould be uſed inſtead of it.*

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When circumſtances about Gods worſhip undetermined by him though commanded by men, do prove an occaſion of ſin againſt Peace and Charity in a conſiderable part of the Church in this Nation, though it be through their weakneſs that it is ſo: and when all other means uſed to cure this weakneſs, have proved unavailable and unſucceſsful; in this caſe it would be conſidered whether the Law of Charity to ſo many Souls, be not a call to them that have power, to remove that ſtumbling-block and occaſion of ſin out of their way, when it may be done without damage to the Church or occaſioning of ſin in any other. And the reaſon why this ſhould be thought on is, becauſe according to the Scriptures, the uſe of things indifferent is in Charity to our Brethrens Souls, to be forborn when they cannot be uſed without occaſioning or endangering their ſinning. If meat make my Brother to offend, I will eat no fleſh while the World ſtands, leſt I make my Brother to offend, *ſaith St.* Paul. *And again,* let no

no man put a ſtumbling-block or an occaſion to fall in his Brothers way. *If then the uſe of things indifferent is to be forborn when ſuch uſe of them will prove an occaſion of ſin in any; then the queſtion is, whether in parity of reaſon the impoſing upon men the uſe of ſuch indifferent things be not to be forborn, as does apparently occaſion diviſion, ſtrife, contention, ſeparation, heart-burning, and great uncharitableneſs among Chriſtians?*

But to proceed; as forbearance and not Church Cenſures would be uſed towards men of different opinions in leſſer things, for the ſake of Peace and Love in the Church which cannot be preſerved without it; ſo to the ſame end Diſcipline would not be neglected nor remiſſly uſed towards groſs Sinners. And the reaſon is, becauſe if it be, bad men will be imboldened to make a Faction in the Church againſt the good, to the hinderance of Peace and Love: and likewiſe becauſe it is one great occaſion of ſeparation. For when the Church is over-

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grown with ſuch ſcandalous perſons, and no regular courſe taken to purge it; experience hath taught us that it makes many out of love with the Communion of the Church for their ſakes, and becomes a temptation to them to forſake it: though that be no more juſtifiable perhaps than the toleration of ſuch ſcandals is which does occaſion it. 'Tis true Church Government by Dioceſan Biſhops is contended againſt by ſome Diſſenters: But I have ſome reaſon to believe, 'that if the Church Government by them were but as effectually managed as it might be for the promoting of Godlineſs, and for the encouraging of good men and all good Miniſters, and for the ſuppreſſing of Vice and diſcountenancing vicious perſons; there are but few would forſake the Church upon account of that kind of Government. If the main ends of Church-Government were but duly purſued, no great matter would be made of it by whom it is done. If ſome obſtructions then were but removed which make the due exerciſe and execution of

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Discipline difficult and uneasie, and the execution of it committed to faithful hands, and due care taken that every one do their duty in their several places without partiality or corruption, it would certainly tend greatly to the Peace of the Church as well as to its purity, and to its flourishing estate in both.

Having said thus much to our Legislators and Governours in behalf of the Churches Peace; I shall now turn my Discourse to the Dissenters themselves. For doubtless they do as truly owe what is in their power to the Peace of the Church, as any other whatsoever: Nay they are obliged more than others to endeavour to repair the breach in it, by how much they have been more concerned than others in making it.. Not to mention what might or should have been done to have kept things from running to so great an extream as we have seen; I shall only crave leave to offer a few things referring to the future in order to Peace.

1. *First*

1. *First then in order to their procuring eaſe where they are pincht, and Peace to the Church, it is adviſable that they abſtain from, and forbear all provoking Language by word or writing, and what tends to render their adverſaries odious to their own party or to others. For if their Adverſaries uſing ſeverity to them be an unlikely way to gain or reconcile them to themſelves, or to work them to a compliance with their terms, as I know they think it is, and ſo do I too; then their uſing ſeverity towards them in another way, and their provoking them, is as unlikely to reconcile their Adverſaries to them, or to procure from them any yielding for their eaſe and accommodation. The manner of our bleſſed Saviour the Prince of Peace, was not to revile again when he was reviled: And St.* Paul *tells us what the manner of his Apoſtles was when they were ill treated, when he ſaith,* being reviled we bleſs, being perſecuted we ſuffer it, being defamed we intreat. *And another Apoſtle gives this reaſon*

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why the Christians should be slow to speak and slow to wrath; because the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God: *it is no fit instrument or tool in labouring for Peace.* For the fruit of Righteousness is sown in Peace of them that make Peace. He that hath knowledge spareth his words, and a man of understanding is of a cool spirit, *saith* Solomon. *And again,* There is that speaketh like the piercings of a Sword, but the tongue of the wise is health.

2. *What our Saviour taught his Disciples for the securing themselves in case of persecution, may well and prudently be observed by the Dissenters in order to the securing Peace to the Church; that is, to be* wise as Serpents, but innocent as Doves: *to go as far to secure Peace in the Church as ever innocency will carry them and suffer them to go: for so much in wisdom they might do to avoid persecution, and the Peace of the Church ought to be as valuable to them as the safety of their persons. What is lawful*

lawful to be done ſhould be yielded to by them, though in ſome reſpect they ſhould deem it inconvenient, rather than the Peace of the Church ſhould be loſt. When the Peace of the Church comes in competition with only matter of conveniency and not of abſolute neceſſity, ſuch matters of conveniency ought to give place to the publick Peace of the Church. There are ſo many, and ſuch great evils of ſtrife, contention, and uncharitableneſs (evils that prey upon the vitals of Religion) which break in upon the Church at the breach that is made in its Peace, that any thing that is not ſinful in it ſelf ſhould be yielded to rather than the publick Peace of the Church ſhould be abandoned, and the Church thereby expoſed to all the miſchief which is conſequent upon the loſs of the Churches Peace.

3. *In order to returning to Peace, they ſhould remember and much conſider, that it is as truly their duty to be for Peace as it is to be for Truth, and that it is more pleaſing to God, and*

more useful to men, and tends more to the honour of Religion, that they should be so, than when their zeal for truth makes them neglect Peace. There are too many that lay out all their zeal in a manner for truth, without due regard to Peace and Love, and think that so long as they contend for truth, they do well and worthily enough, though they take little care for Peace in the manner of doing it. Whereas the Scripture makes Peace as well as Truth a great and considerable part of the Christian Religion. When the Apostles did so frequently exhort the Christians to Peace in contending for their different opinions under the notion of contending for Truth; their meaning doubtless was to perswade them so to plead for Truth in those lesser matters about which they differed, as not to destroy Peace one with another. And if this rule of duty be but observed by the Dissenters, it will make them studious how to manage their different apprehensions with such moderation and discretion, as that the substantials

ſtantials of Religion, Peace and Charity may not ſuffer by it. And this rule if obſerved, will lead them likewiſe to conſider how far they may without wronging Religion or their Conſcience, yield for Peace ſake and to preſerve Love; and in doing ſo, that is in ſtudying to be quiet as the Apoſtle exhorted Chriſtians to be, they may perhaps find juſt cauſe in many a caſe to comply farther than they were aware of, or at firſt ſight of things thought they might have done. When our Saviour ſayes, Judge not according to appearance, but judge righteous judgment, *it implies, that a right judgment in many Caſes is not to be made by the firſt appearance of things, nor unleſs they be narrowly looked into, and the ſeveral circumſtances weighed which relate to them. Men many times that have taken up with the firſt appearance of things, have gone away with a great deal of ſatisfaction and much confidence for ſome time, who yet when they have afterwards been drawn more narrowly to ſcan the ſame*

thing over again, and to ſearch into it throughly, have found cauſe to make another and a better judgment of the ſame thing than they did before. And well-meaning men are never more in danger of being deceived by the firſt appearance of things, than when thoſe appearances ſeem to carry in them a zeal for God and for his Laws, and for the purity of his worſhip. We ſee how zealous and forward the Phariſees were to cenſure ſeveral actions of our Saviour and of his Diſciples, which at firſt ſight ſeemed to them no better than a prophaning of the Sabbath day. Which yet they would have found to have been quite otherwiſe, if they had been able to have penetrated into thoſe parallel Caſes by which our Saviour juſtifies his own and his Diſciples actions, againſt their unjuſt accuſations. And thus ſome well-meaning people ſhew their zeal for God as they think, againſt the Common-Prayer Book; becauſe it is of humane contrivance, and becauſe nothing is to be done in the worſhip of God which he

has

has not commanded or appointed, as they are wont to alledge: and has not this a ſpecious appearance at firſt ſight? And yet a very little looking narrowly into this matter, will diſcover the miſtake in it. For firſt the intrinſick ſubſtance of the Prayers are certainly appointed by God, being either matter of Confeſſion, Supplication, Petition, Interceſſion, or Thanksgiving. And then for the Cloathing the internal ſubſtance with an external mode of performance, though there be humane contrivance in it, yet that contrivance correſponding with Gods general rules of Prayer, being made in a known tongue and to edification, and in decent and reverent geſtures, it does agree with every right made publick Prayer whatſoever. For what Prayer is there that any uſe in publick Aſſemblies or in private either, if vocal, but is of humane contrivance, unleſs the Lords Prayer? For God has not determined by the Scriptures, that publick Prayer ſhall be made without a ſet Form, nor in a ſet Form without any other,

nor whether only in one Prayer or more, nor if in more how many they ſhall be, nor how long nor in what method. Theſe things muſt be ordered by humane contrivance, ones own or others, if men will pray at all in any other words than the Lords Prayer. And ſo long as the Prayers do but agree with the foreſaid general rules, they are of Gods appointment ſo far as he has made any appointment at all, whether they be contrived in a ſet Form or without, in one or more, or in various methods, or kneeling, or ſtanding, or the like.

Others though they will not ſay the Common Prayers are unlawful, yet think others better that are made without any ſuch limitation and reſtriction as the Common Prayers are. And becauſe we are bound to worſhip and ſerve our God with the beſt and in the beſt manner we can, they think it ground ſufficient to leave the Parochial Aſſemblies to join with thoſe that worſhip God in a better mode. Here's another fair appearance at firſt ſight, as they no doubt do think.

I ſhall not here diſpute which of the two is the better way of praying; but ſhall argue the undueneſs of their practice that withdraw from the Parochial Aſſemblies upon the foreſaid ground, though it ſhould be ſuppoſed that that's the better mode of Prayer which they take to be ſo. That we are to worſhip God with the greateſt Devotion of Soul we can when ever we do worſhip him, we are agreed in: and likewiſe that we are to worſhip him in the beſt external mode of worſhip we can, when circumſtances concur to make it beſt to do ſo. But doubtleſs it is a great miſtake if we think Almighty God expects that we ſhould imbroil the Church, diſturb its Peace, and ſet on foot uncharitableneſs (the inſeparable effects of ſeparation) and by diviſion weaken that united ſtrength by which Religion is ſupported in the World, and all this only to preſent him with a mode of worſhip ſomewhat better than another, when yet the other is competently uſeful to the ſame end, and without the forementioned inconvenien-

cies attending it. In such a case we have great reason to believe, that God desires Mercy, Peace, and Charity, with a less convenient mode of worship, rather than a more convenient one without these, or in the neglect or loss of these. He has *said*, that he desires mercy and not Sacrifice: *He had rather have no Sacrifice than to have it upon such terms as the loss of Charity, Peace and Mercy comes to. And if so, how much more then will a less Sacrifice with Mercy, Charity and Peace please him better, than a greater with the loss of these? These instances are given as a taste to shew how easily well-meaning people may deceive themselves by first appearances of things; and how necessary it is to look into the inwards of things, and to view them round, before we make a judgment of such things as at first sight seem to part Truth and Peace.*

4. *If the Dissenters would give a proof of their real love to Peace, and sincere desire to bring things to a peaceable issue in the Church, then let them*

be

be perſwaded to accept of reaſonable ſatisfaction. And that I mean by reaſonable ſatisfaction which is ſufficient to convince their judgment and ſatisfie their Conſcience touching the terms of Communion in our Pariſh Churches, as that they are none other than ſuch as make that Communion lawful, though they ſhould not be able to obtain what would make it fully adequate to their affection and deſire in all things. And that I reckon makes Communion with a Church lawful, when there is a conſent or an agreement among the members, in the ſubſtance of ſaving Doctrine and Worſhip, and nothing made the condition of that Communion which is ſinful in it ſelf. For in ſuch a conſent were the Churches planted by the Apoſtles founded, by which they were diſtinguiſhed from the Infidel World. And no after difference among them about leſſer things was ever allowed as a ſufficient cauſe of breaking Communion. And upon theſe terms are our Pariſh Churches founded. Now a taking up with ſatisfaction

faction touching the lawfulneſs of Communion upon theſe terms, is neceſſary to the keeping of the Unity of the Spirit in the bond of Peace in any Chriſtian Church whatſoever. And the reaſon is, becauſe if a conſent in thoſe things which are eſſential to the being of a true Church, be not ſufficient to hold the parts together in Communion: and if nothing leſs be ſufficient but what every one ſingly judges beſt, not ſimply to the being, but better being of the Church and Communion in it in all circumſtances relating to outward adminiſtration of Worſhip and Government, it would be impoſſible to keep them from running into confuſion and multiplying ſeparations, upon theſe two accounts. Firſt, becauſe all matters and circumſtances about theſe leſſer things are not ſo particularly ſtated and determined in Scripture, as thoſe ſubſtantials of doctrine and worſhip are which are eſſential to the being of a Church and Communion in it. And ſecondly, becauſe of the different apprehenſions and affections that are among Chriſtians

Chriſtians in reference to the betterneſs of ſuch circumſtances in Church affairs, as are no otherwiſe ſtated than by general rules. For in meaſuring particular Caſes and circumſtances by general rules, that which one judges moſt agreeable to ſuch rules, another will judge otherwiſe. And indeed the not taking up with ſuch a ſatisfaction as I have deſcribed, is the true reaſon at the bottom of the many Sects into which our Church of England *is now divided. For the Presbyterians firſt brake with thoſe that were for Epiſcopal Government, and the Brownists firſt, and then thoſe of the Congregational way after departed from the Presbyterians, and the Anabaptiſts from them, and the Quakers from them, as alſo ſome of the Fifth Monarchy men. All of theſe originally were agreed in the ſubſtance of ſaving doctrine and worſhip, and all continue to be ſo ſtill for ought I know, except the Quakers. But each of theſe have divided from the other in Communion (except the Quakers) upon the account*

account of their different opinions about some lesser things than that substance of saving doctrine and worship which are essential to a Church and the Communion of it. In every remove they had as they thought, something better in prospect than was in use or in opinion among them from whom they departed; which was still the ruling principle in their several separations and subdivisions. And if ever Almighty God shall have so much favour for us who are now so miserably divided, as to bring us unto any considerable consistence and union, it must in all probability be by perswading us all to take up with an agreement and consent in the substance of that saving doctrine and worship on which the Apostolical Churches were first founded, and which were the terms also of their Communion. For so long as agreement and consent, not only in substantials but also in lesser matters, and such as are more disputable and uncertain, are made the condition of Communion, it is impossible to keep the Church in Peace, and free from

from diviſion upon diviſion, and ſeparation upon ſeparation, as we have ſeen abundantly verified in the forementioned inſtances here in this Nation. If there be an agreement in the ſubſtantials, Chriſtian forbearance muſt be uſed towards one another in our differences about leſſer matters, and we muſt never ſeek or endeavour a ſupply of what we think is wanting in the Church, farther than ſuch endeavours will conſiſt with keeping Unity in the bond of Peace, and ſo far we may. To accept of ſuch a ſatisfaction as has been deſcribed, and to acquieſce in it as a condition of Peace, is hugely neceſſary to a publick ſettlement in a Nation Chriſtian by profeſſion, which yet doubtleſs is the moſt advantagious method to propagate and promote the Chriſtian Religion in general. For in ſuch a ſettlement it is not to be expected that only ſuch matters and circumſtances can be pitcht upon as every one will count beſt; it were well if that could be hit upon which every one would count tolerably good. Some for inſtance would

would count it beſt to have the publick Prayers without any Liturgie if they could obtain it. Others they are of another mind, and will think it is beſt for the people in general, and more accommodate to the capacity of the weaker ſort which are always the major part, to have part at leaſt of the publick Prayers in a fixed Form. Becauſe by ſuch a Form, Prayer-matter is prepared with more advantage to affect ſuch peoples minds, than otherwiſe it would be. For by their being familiarly acquainted with the words and matter of a ſet Form, that matter has a more ready acceſs to their minds, and is more likely to abide with them than what they are leſs acquainted with, and which more tranſiently paſſes away. And though another way of praying may be more ſutable to ſome, yet if this be better for more, regard to their edification ſhould ſway much with all good men, who ſhould not ſeek their own things, nor their own profit only, but the profit of many that they may be ſaved, as St. Paul ſayes he did.

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However, the Peace of the Church muſt not be violated for the betterneſs of an external mode of worſhip, provided that which ſome eſteem not ſo good do not defeat its own end, but is competently uſeful to it. This ſtill ſhews the neceſſity in order to Peace of taking up with that which I have called reaſonable ſatisfaction. As for the preſent Liturgie, though I do not underſtand but that it is generally agreeable to the Liturgies in uſe in the pureſt Primitive Times after the Apoſtles, and long before the riſe of Popery, yet if it may in any reſpects be made better, and to more general ſatisfaction, I could then wiſh for Peace ſake and to remove prejudice, that ſome emendation might be made in it, or elſe ſome latitude indulged to Miniſters in the uſe of it.

5. *And that which I ſhall chiefly commend to them, and which I have oft hinted at, both before and in the following Diſcourſe, and which I ſhall now a little more fully inſiſt upon is this,* viz. *That in all their differences with*

others

others about leſſer things in Religion, ſpecial care may be taken that leſſer things may be over-ruled by the greater, and not the greater by the leſs. That is, that other leſſer matters give place to Love and Peace, and not Love and Peace to them. By leſſer things, I mean Doctrines concerning points not neceſſary to ſalvation, and things relating not to the inward ſubſtance but outward circumſtances of Gods worſhip, and ſuch things likewiſe as concern not the being but better being of the Church in point of Government, Governours, and Diſcipline, and the like. Now though there are ſome circumſtances more convenient than other, relating to the external part of Gods worſhip, and other circumſtances likewiſe which tend more than other to the perfection of Government and Diſcipline in the Church; yet when Chriſtians are of different opinions about theſe, ſome holding theſe, others holding other to be beſt to the ends and purpoſes to which they relate; in this caſe neither the one nor the other

are

are to ſtand ſo ſtiffly for what they think beſt in theſe leſſer things, as to break Communion and ſeparate, and thereby deſtroy Love and Peace rather than not carry it according to their own mind. Men may endeavour to have things of this kind run according to their own private opinion ſo long and ſo far as Charity and Peace govern in ſuch endeavours. But when they chuſe rather to break the Church in pieces, and to put all into a flame, and to make a Church War of it rather than not to have their will and their way in theſe leſſer things: this is not to keep the Unity of the Spirit in the bond of Peace, but to make the leſſer things over-rule the greater, and the greater to truckle to the leſs. Now Love and Peace are next to the love of God the great Chriſtian Duties: the firſt and great Commandment is to love God, and the ſecond is like it, which is to love our Neighbours, and eſpecially our Chriſtian Brethren, and is therefore called the Royal Law. To promote Love and Peace

wherein our likeneſs to God conſiſts, is the very ſcope and deſign of the Goſpel. The end of the Commandment is Charity, *ſaith St.* Paul, *ſpeaking of the Goſpel.* The Kingdom of God is righteouſneſs, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghoſt, *as he ſaith in another place. The introducing and eſtabliſhing of theſe, is the end and deſign of Chriſts Kingdom and Government by the Goſpel. The Adminiſtration of this Government by Preaching and Praying, by Sacraments and Church aſſociation, and all Orders and Officers in Gods Houſe, are but means appointed to this end, to bring men to Love and Peace with Faith.*

But when Preaching, Praying, and aſſociating are ſo managed as that they become inſtruments of drawing People from their Pariſh Churches, and of keeping up ſuch a diviſion and ſeparation, as by which the Peace of the Church is violated, and which naturally tends to hinder Love in them to others, and in others to them, they ſeem to run

counter to the end for which God has designed them. And though men may Preach up Love and Peace, and pray for it, and press men to it never so much, yet if they put themselves into such circumstances of doing this, as naturally tend to strife, division, and disaffection among Christian Brethren, they seem to act inconsistently, and to cross the true end of Preaching, Praying, and associating, and to destroy one way what they build up another: And though men by these may increase in knowledge and in zeal for purity of Ordinances and regular Discipline and Government in the Church, yet if their Religion terminate in this, or if their zeal for these be not acted in subordination to Charity and Peace, but rather in opposition to them and without due care to preserve these between themselves and the Brethren from whom they separate or dissent, many may easily be deceived by this means, and be far from being what they take themselves to be. If any man among you seem to be

religious, and bridleth not his tongue (*from unchristian vilifying, reproaching, slandering, and censuring*) *he* deceives his own heart, and his Religion is vain. *Those in the Church of* Corinth *were zealous of spiritual gifts and abounded in them; yet because they laid waste Charity in a great measure by their divisions and contentions, by their envying and making of parties, and by being for one teacher against another;* St. Paul *did not stick to pronounce them* carnal; *yea and gave them to understand that their gifts of tongues and prophesying, of knowledge and understanding all mysteries, of Faith also; yea though they should add thereto the giving their goods to feed the poor, and their bodies to be burned: though their zeal should rise so high, yet if they had not Charity, all would profit them nothing.*

Since then Charity and Peace are so considerable in the Christian Religion, as that the whole Ministration of the Gospel, Preaching, Praying, Sacraments and

and Church Aſſociations, are ordained and deſigned to promote them: and ſince all the other without theſe will not avail men, nor ſo much as denominate them good Chriſtians; great reaſon there is then that we ſhould never be ſo much for ſuch a uſe of the one as will deſtroy, hurt, or hinder the other. Theſe of Charity and Peace are the end as I have ſhow'd, the other are but the means; and it is prepoſterous to prefer the means before the end, or to make the end give place to the means. If differences do ariſe about the leſſer things of Religion, or about ſome circumſtances relating to the inſtruments of Religion, Peace and Charity are to umpire the difference in ſuch Caſes, and the other things to be over-ruled by them: no ſide of the difference may carry it againſt Peace and Love, but all ſuch differences muſt be managed as that Peace and Love may be preſerved whole and entire. Let the peace of God rule in your hearts, *or* Umpire *as the word is rendred: that muſt be Moderator in*

all differences between Christian Brethren about the lesser things. St. Peter *speaks a great word when he sayes,* above all things have fervent Charity among your selves. *And St.* Paul *likewise when he saith,* above all these put on Charity which is the bond of perfectness. *In all our zeal about the inferiour things in Religion, and about the instruments of it, we should always be most zealous for Charity, because all other without this will profit nothing, as I shew'd before; zeal for other things may make a noise, and cause men to be cryed up among men, but will never obtain them approbation from God where Charity and Peace are laid aside. We should therefore sooner let go some other things for a time, though otherwise truly valuable for their end and use, than to lose these of Peace and Love to retain those.*

It is very true, there is no evil to be done that good may come: but yet a lesser good, not only may but ought to be omitted for the doing or procuring a greater.

greater. Sacrifice was an ordinance of God, and yet when this at any time hindred mercy, it was to be omitted or ſuſpended for ſo long as it did ſo, that mercy might take place: I will have mercy and not ſacrifice, ſaid God by his Prophet. And for like reaſon Circumciſion another Ordinance of God, was diſcontinued for forty years in the Wilderneſs. And this puts me in mind of the Caſe of the old Non-Conformiſts: For they ſuffered deprivation and ſilencing by the Biſhops, as thoſe of the Miniſtry among the Diſſenters have done by Act of Parliament: and I confeſs it is a very great calamity that it has been ſo, and that things had not otherwiſe been compoſed. But why did not thoſe old Non-Conformiſts, for the exerciſe of the Miniſtry and Function they had received, and for the general good of the people who ſtood in need of more ſuch Miniſters as they were: I ſay, why did not they for theſe reaſons gather Aſſemblies, erect ſeparate Congregations? but on the contrary, zealouſly

lously oppose the Brownists for endeavouring to do so, but that they thought they should have done the Church and the Christian Cause more hurt one way than good another, if they had not forborn to do so. And when the hurt which has been done in several respects, and which is yet farther like to follow, by our dividing, and contending, and separating, shall be put in the ballance against the good that hath been done by it, and the manner of it, it will be found a difficult thing for them that have been active in it, to demonstrate to their own satisfaction, much more to the satisfaction of others, that the advantage will fall on the latter side.

Upon the whole matter then, since our divisions are of such an ill tendency as they are, to hinder that love which is essential to the being of a good Christian, two things I am sure are very necessary for the Dissenters to do in this case. First, that they be very jealous over themselves lest the temptation they have put themselves under by making

the breach ſo wide, ſhould be too hard for them in leſſening their love to them who differ from them but in leſſer things. Secondly, that nothing be wanting in them which they may or can do to take themſelves off from continuing that ſtumbling-block which they have laid in their way that differ from them; partly by occaſioning uncharitableneſs in them towards themſelves, and partly by occaſioning ſome to queſtion the Truth of Chriſtianity it ſelf upon account of their difference about it that pretend moſt knowledge in it, and moſt zeal for it. It is an awakening word, that of our Saviour, when he ſaid, Wo unto the World becauſe of offences, and wo to them by whom they come. *By which we are taught, that the offence which the World takes at the Chriſtian Religion, ſo as never truly to receive it, proceeds very much from the unwary and unworthy behaviour of many that are of the Church by profeſſion; and that they have a ſad account to make that lay this ſtumbling-block before*

fore them. That our divisions and unchristian contentions, have been such a stumbling-block and offence unto many to cause them to fall; some into Atheism, some into Scepticism, some into Popery, and to stagger and unsettle many others, is every wise mans thought. And not only so, but that the malignity of this distemper has been so diffusive, as that scarce any man among us is so good and happy, as not either actively or passively to be made worse by it, or at least hindred from being so good as otherwise he would or might have been, by having the fervency of his Charity due to Christian Brethren interrupted and lessened more or less, and his joy proportionally diminished. Our zeal about things but little comparatively, hath eaten up the comfort of love in a great measure, and made the Christian temper and genius of men to become less pure and refined, and less genuine and kindly by our uncharitable differences about them. And if these things are and have been the effects of our divisions, what need then

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is there of repentance in every one of us who have done any thing unneceſſarily towards the firſt making, or after maintaining of them? If we would retrieve then what we have loſt by our diviſions, and reſtore to the Church the Peace we have rob'd her of, and thereby manifeſt the truth of our repentance for what is paſt, and prevent the farther growth and ſpreading of this Plague for the future; we muſt every one in our places be doing what in us lies to remove the cauſe, by abating what may be abated on the one hand, and by yielding what may be yielded to on the other hand. Theſe things are of that nature, that there is no man I ſhould think that is really concerned in his own mind for the ſucceſs of the Goſpel in its main deſign, and for the honour of our Religion, and the true Intereſt of mens Souls, but will conſider them and be affected with them.

6. *Separation is no good method or fitting means to procure ſuch a Reformation as the Diſſenters aim at, or a Reforma-*

Reformation of corruptions, either in persons or things, in any such Church as does maintain such doctrine and worship as is necessary to the being of a true Church, as all the Reformed Churches do. Which assertion may be made good upon several accounts.

As first, Because we have no Command from God for such a method of Reformation in any such Church, nor any approved example of using such a method in all the Book of God. Neither the Holy Prophets of old, nor our Saviour in his time, ever attempted a Reformation of the many corruptions that were crept into the Church of the Jews, by separating from Communion in the substance of the true worship of God which was retained, notwithstanding those corruptions. Nor were the Churches in the Apostles time free from all corruption and disorder: but yet a redress thereof was never prescribed or attempted by separation. But of this I have discoursed more particularly in the following Treatise.

Secondly,

Secondly, It is no fit means to obtain a Reformation of what the Diſſenters deſire may be reformed in our Church, becauſe it tends to weaken that intereſt by which it is to be obtained. For firſt it tends to diſoblige thoſe more than before, who are in a better capacity than others to farther or hinder ſuch a deſign. Secondly, it divides thoſe that ſeparate, from thoſe within the Church from which they ſeparate, that were moſt likely to favour ſuch a deſign of Reformation, ſo far as juſt, reaſonable, and prudential; and by that weakens the means by which ſuch a thing ſhould be effected. For they ſtood in a fairer capacity of promoting any publick good in the Church while they kept in it in Conjunction with others, than they have put themſelves into by rending themſelves from it, to the grief and diſcouragement of thoſe whom they deſert.

Thirdly, Such a ſeparation as that under conſideration, hinders Reformation by hindering Charity. If Charity towards all that are concerned in a Reformation,

formation, do not appear in all endeavours of procuring it, such endeavours are destitute of that which is most likely to make them successful. Charity towards those that differ from us, is a powerful means of reconciling them to us in time, and to draw them to be of our mind if we have truth on our side, and to join with us in promoting any honest and worthy design. It is Gods own method of reconciling us unto himself, and of Enemies to make us to become his Friends, and to affect and design the same things as he does. And we cannot use a better method to gain upon men and to win them to be on our side in any worthy design, than by writing herein after his Copy. Which doubtless is one special reason why St. Paul *in one place says,* Let all your things be done with Charity; *and in another,* edifying it self in love, *speaking of the Church: and* forbearing one another in love, *is enjoined in order to the* keeping of the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace, *as I shew'd before.*

To

To be actuated by love in our transactions and converse with men, as it is the true genius of a Gospel Spirit, so it is the best and most effectual way of effecting and bringing to pass those things in the Church which are most agreeable to the Gospel. And if this Heaven-born Principle did but powerfully govern and influence all those which I hope fear God, in all they do in seeking a Reformation, I should not doubt but the happy effects of it would be very visible, at least in a few years. I doubt not but there will come a time before the end of the World, in which there will be a Reformation, not only in all Christendom, but throughout the World in general. And I am perswaded when ever it shall be brought about, it will be chiefly by the mighty operation of the Spirit of God upon the minds of men, in causing Charity so much to abound among them, as shall carry all before it by degrees, and render Christianity so lovely a thing, both in the Governours and Governed, that scarce any shall dare to oppose it,

or

or to make parties againſt Reformation in its perfection. And we who now live can take no better a courſe to haſten on thoſe happy times by removing out of the way by degrees that which hinders, than to govern all our endeavours of a Reformation by ſuch prudent Charity and Meekneſs, as may be ſufficient to convince men that there is nothing done or endeavoured of this nature, out of a ſpirit of oppoſition, humour, or peeviſhneſs, of envy, ambition, or ſelfiſhneſs, but all with a real and ſincere reſpect to the common good of men, and the honour of God and his excellent Religion which we profeſs. And if this were but really done by as many as would be aſhamed profeſſedly to own themſelves Enemies to ſuch a method of Reformation, we ſhould quickly have an end put to our undue ſeparations, and unchriſtian Contentions.

This being ſo, that Charity is ſo greatly neceſſary to the proſpering of all endeavours that ſhall at laſt end in a kindly, but not violent and conſtrained Reformation;

mation; whatsoever then tends to hinder Charity among Christians, or to obscure it in their endeavours in seeking a reformation, must needs proportionably obstruct the success of such endeavours, and cross their design. If there be any thing in the endeavours themselves of a Reformation, or that does accompany such endeavours, that ministers any just occasion of suspicion that such attempts proceed from any worse principle than Charity, or are designed for any worse end than the common good of the community of Christians in general, and not only of this or that party, that very thing whatever it may be, will mightily enervate and weaken such attempts. But now separation in the Dissenters from our Parochial Communion, is in it self an act of great uncharitableness; and tends to ingender uncharitableness between them and such as they separate from; and therefore can be no good method or fitting means to procure the Reformation they design and seek. If the Dissenters ei-

ther be or think themſelves to be any better than thoſe they ſeparate from (and their ſeparation it ſelf does beſpeak them ſo to think) then ſuch their ſeparation is as really and truly an uncharitable act as it is for the healthy in a Family to withdraw from the ſick, or the ſtrong from the weak, and the Men and Women from the Children, and to leave them to ſhift for themſelves. For the better ſort in particular Churches to ſeparate and withdraw from thoſe in it which are not ſo good, and to imbody themſelves apart, is ſuch a piece of uncharitableneſs, as is croſs to one principal end of Churchſhip, which is the edifying one another, the watching over and taking care one of another, the better to be helpful to the worſe to make them better, the ſtrong and more lively to encourage, quicken, and ſtrengthen the weaker, and thoſe that are dull and backward. And indeed the Apoſtle by the ſimilitude of a natural body, and of Gods having ſo tempered the parts thereof together, as to give more abun-

abundant honour to that part which lacketh, *doth intimate that more care and pains ſhould be beſtowed on thoſe members in the Church that are more defective than upon others that are leſs, ſo far ſhould they be from being withdrawn from and neglected. And our Saviours ſerious caution is to be taken notice of and remembred upon this occaſion:* take heed that ye deſpiſe not one of theſe little ones. *And as ſuch ſeparation is uncharitable in it ſelf, ſo it tends alſo to ingender uncharitableneſs between thoſe that ſeparate and thoſe that are ſeparated from. The truth of this alas is too too manifeſt, in that inſtead of diſcourſing of good Sermons and other edifying Subjects, as good people were wont to do when they met together before our unhappy times of diviſion and ſeparation; now it is too common among many, to entertain one another with diſcourſes of what they have pickt up or conceived in their own minds, tending to leſſen the eſteem, if not to make odious ſuch as are not of*

their party, especially such Ministers as are not, as if they had a mind to make others disaffected towards them. And such things as these as they grate hard upon the Ears of sober and moderate men, and fill their minds with grief; so they prove matter of great provocation to others to retaliate. And thus by tossing Firebrands to and fro, the minds both of Men and Women come to be put into a flame, and exulcerated: And all this in a great measure at least, as the most unhappy effect of separation and division. And thus separation instead of proving a method of Reformation, proves in the effects of it to be a method of corrupting the minds and manners of men with far worse things than those for the sake of which they separate. In this way abundance of people seem to lose the substance by contending for shadows; so far is such a separation as is now discoursed of, from being a fitting means of Reformation. For indeed this remedy seems to be much worse than the Disease.

I know indeed that it is supposed and objected, that in case something should be done for the ease of the Dissenters, yet it would bring but few of them into the Church who now have setled themselves in another way. But I would fain hope that this is but a suspicion in reference to most of them. However lest there should be found any backwardness in any of them as to this, I shall add a few words more to what I have said already, further to incline them all gladly and thankfully to accept of moderate terms of Union when ever they can have them. And to this end I would in the first place convince them that those who have separated and withdrawn themselves from Communion in our Parish Assemblies, have thereby departed from the Primitive Pattern, while they have thought they have been reforming according to it. For that in our Parish Churches, which was sufficient to hold the first Christians together in Communion, has not been sufficient for them: and that is an agreement in professing

those principal points of Faith and Worship which are necessary to salvation, and are wont to be called fundamentals, of which I have said somewhat before. Let them search and see throughout the whole New Testament, if the Churches planted by the Apostles themselves, were not all founded in such an agreement; and whether this was not the measure and band of their Communion also. They were usually baptized after so little and short a time of teaching, that they could not be instructed in more than the general and chief Doctrines and Heads of Christianity. And yet their Baptism upon such a profession as they made upon such little teaching, was their entrance into the Church. And nothing more was necessary to their Communion in a particular Church, but mutual consent. See what heads of Doctrine the Apostles Sermon consisted of in Acts 2. *Upon receiving of which, three thousand were presently baptized, and the same day added to the Church. And then upon this they continued in the Apostles Doctrine*

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and Fellowſhip, and in breaking of Bread and Prayer. The ſum and ſubſtance of the Doctrine preached to them and received by them, upon which their Baptiſm, Incorporation, and Communion followed, was, that Jeſus *of* Nazareth *whom they had Crucified, was by God raiſed from the dead, and made both Lord and Chriſt: and to perſwade them to repent and be baptized, in order to their obtaining the forgiveneſs of their ſin. See likewiſe what Doctrine was preach'd to the* Eunuch, Cornelius, *and the Jaylor, before they were baptized. The firſt Principles of the Doctrine of Chriſt, called by the Apoſtle the* foundation, *were ſuch as conſiſted of ſuch Doctrines as* repentance from dead works, Faith towards God, Baptiſm, the Reſurrection of the dead and eternal Judgment. *For upon a conſent in ſuch points as theſe, the Churches were founded. St.* Paul *perſwaded the Church of* Epheſus *by all means to keep Unity upon this very ground, that they had all one and the ſame God*

and Father, and one Lord Mediator, and were influenced by one Spirit, were of one Faith and one Hope, and had all one Baptism. And are not the same Doctrines of Christianity professed by those of our Parish Churches, and the same Ordinances of worship used? Have they any other God or Mediator than the first Christians had? or any other Articles of Faith, or any other worship than they had? Have they not the same Sacraments? and do they not pray for the same things? Or is there any thing added in Doctrine or Worship that is contrary to that in which the first Christian Churches were agreed, as there is in the Church of Rome? *And can they find that ever any good Christians of the first Churches did break Communion upon any difference that was among them about any lesser matters than those upon agreement in which they were first united? And were not all their contentions that had any tendency towards such a thing, sharply reproved by the Apostles? And if these things*

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be ſo; then what can be plainer than that a ſeparation from our Proteſtant Pariſh Churches, and the worſhip therein perſormed, is a manifeſt innovation, *and a departing from the Primitive pattern laid down in Scripture? And if this be not Schiſm, and that in a high degree, I would fain know what is. From all which it cannot but be infer'd, that thoſe who have made themſelves guilty of ſuch a ſeparation, are as much obliged to repent of what they have done, and to return to Parochial Communion, as they are to make the Scripture their rule, and not to live and allow themſelves in a manifeſt deviation from the primitive pattern.*

Our differences and ſeparations are not for want of any thing in our Pariſh Aſſemblies that are eſſential to the being of a true Church, nor for any exceſs or redundancy of matter, deſtructive of the eſſence of ſuch a Church, or of the worſhip of God in it. Nor is the queſtion in difference whether a Miniſtry and Ordinances are neceſſary in the Church;

Church; but the question is who should rule and govern in these affairs, who should ordain the several Pastors to their Office, and who should oversee them that they do their duty in it, or call them to account for neglect or disorder; whether Diocesan Bishops, or the several Classes of Presbyters, or whether the people of each Church. Not whether the best method is to be used in a Christian state, to propagate and promote Christianity, but whether or no to allow any that will, to gather Congregations without publick approbation, be that best method. Not whether publick Prayers and Sacraments are necessary, but whether the form and method of Administration prescribed by our Liturgy be tolerable, or rather, whether it be so convenient as another is or might be. Not whether Baptism be necessary, but whether it be necessary to administer it to those born of Christian Parents, in their Infancy or at Age, or which of these was practised in the Apostles days. Now these things in which our several differences

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lie, are far from those fundamentals, in agreement in which, the first Churches and their Communion were founded. And the nature of them, and of our different opinions about them is but such, as may well enough consist with their joint Communion in the same Church who are of those different opinions, when the essence of a true Church, Ministry, and Ordinances of worship is there, as it is in our Parish Churches. And men of all the foresaid different opinions may be born with, although they do endeavour to promote their several notions, while in Communion in the same Church, so long as they do it in a regular way, and without breach of Peace or Charity. But to separate, divide, and to break all into several pieces as we have done, upon the account of these different apprehensions, while yet we all agree in the main, is doubtless an effect of intemperate zeal, and such as carries men off from following the primitive pattern. So great is the inconvenience shall I say? or mischief rather, of making

king leſſer things the condition of Communion, than were made ſo in the Primitive Church. The Diſſenters great complaint is, that in our Pariſh Churches ſuch things are made the condition of Communion which the Scripture has not made ſo; but are not aware that they themſelves do ſo too while they make their doubtful and diſputable opinions the band of their Union. Though it may not be convenient to make more the condition of Communion than is neceſſary, yet it's much better to obſerve that condition being made, ſuppoſing it lawful to do ſo, than it is to ſeparate. And ſeparate we may not where the eſſentials of a true Church and Goſpel Miniſtration are, and nothing made the condition of Communion that is ſinful, though ſomething more ſhould be impoſed than in ſimple conſideration is convenient. But without all doubt the better, and more certain way to preſerve the Church in Peace and Unity, and to cut off all pretence of cauſe of ſeparation, is to make no doubtful or diſputable opinion

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or thing the condition of Communion, but such great, necessary and unquestionable things, as in which all Orthodox Christians have always been wont to be agreed. And the like might be said touching Confessions of Faith.

Secondly, I would beseech them seriously to consider, whether there be so much as a moral possibility of ever cureing our rents and divisions, without making a consent in such Doctrines of Faith and Worship as are necessary to Salvation, the rule and boundary of Church Communion. Can any one of those several parties that have separated, ever expect that all the rest that differ from them should ever unite by an agreement in those minute points and opinions that difference, distinguish and divide them from one another? Can the Presbyterians, or the Congregationalists, or the Anabaptists, or any other party expect that ever all the other that differ from them, should ever concenter and agree in that by which they are differenced from all the rest? If our Lord and

and Saviour has not made those lesser opinions wherein the foresaid parties differ one from another, the Standard of Communion in all his Churches, as undoubtedly he has not, then it must needs be an unreasonable thing for them to expect that he should ever by his grace draw all his Disciples and faithful followers to concenter in any one of them as such a Standard. That which our Saviour hath made the Standard of Communion in his Churches, is that substance of doctrine and worship in which the whole Catholick Church has ordinarily been agreed in all times and places of the Christian World. And therefore the Primitive Churches and so downward, have always had such Creeds and Liturgies in use among them, as by which they declared not only the agreement of each Church among themselves in Faith and Worship, but also their consent and agreement with the whole Catholick Church therein. And the old Non-Conformists, though they were dissatisfied in some things required

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in order to their entering upon the Ministry, yet always held as well as any other, that an agreement in the main and principal doctrines, or points of Faith and Worship, ought to keep men from separating from one another. The profession and Preaching of the true Doctrine in all fundamental points, is the only proper and certain note of a true Church, *saith* Mr. Arthur Hildersham, *one of the most eminent among them. And again,* Those Assemblies that enjoy the word and doctrine of Salvation, though there remain many corruptions in them, are to be acknowledged the true Churches of God, and such as none of the faithful may make separation from. *His Lectures on* John 4. p. 165, 167. *This being so, it still shows how unreasonable a thing it is to make such by-opinions the test and standard of Communion, that stand off from the general substance of Faith and Worship, by agreement in which the Catholick Church is united: and how unreasonable it is*

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to refuſe all terms of Concord and Communion that are not commenſurate to theſe by-opinions, which are ſuch, as but very few of the whole body of Chriſtians would ever own, much leſs make the condition of Communion. If the ſeveral diſſenting parties then would but give themſelves liberty diſpaſſionately and calmly to conſider ſuch things as theſe; methinks they ſhould not have the heart to think it better to keep open our lamentable breaches, till this or that of their different opinions carry it from all the reſt, which is never likely to be, than it is to concenter in thoſe generals, by agreement in which the Primitive Chriſtians were united.

And that they may not think it better to do ſo, I ſhall in the third place beſeech them to reflect upon, and to lay more to heart the conſequence of dividing upon ſuch private and narrow opinions or principles as thoſe are which have carried the ſeveral parties off from Parochial Communion that are off; and what ſuch diviſion and ſeparation has

already

already produced, and is likely farther to produce. The beginning of such division has in its progress been an inlet to the many Sects among us. The old Non-Conformists, though they did not separate from Parochial Communion, but always opposed it with as much zeal as any; yet they using certain arguments for some emendation in Church affairs, the Brownists they come and improve those arguments against the Non-Conformists themselves, and inferred from them the necessity of such a separation as the Brownists themselves made. And after this, those for the Congregational way sprang out of the Brownists, and used their arguments for themselves, only became somewhat refined from their rigidness. And then the Anabaptists who agreed with the Brownists and Congregationalists in all other Principles, advanced one step farther and denied Infant Baptism to be lawful, and upon that account separated from them also. And then in our late unhappy troubles, a great party was drawn off from those

that adhered to the publick eſtabliſh-ment by Law, and ſet on foot a work of Reformation in the Church, as they reckoned. Upon this others from among them, thought they might as well divide again from them to carry on the work of Reformation further, as they had divided from the other to begin it. And a third party ſerved the ſecond as the ſecond had done the firſt, and a fourth the third, as the third had done the ſecond, and ſo on. And thus the firſt diviſion multiplied and brought forth others of ſeveral ſorts, until it iſſued at laſt in a Babel *of Confuſion: From all which, alas how many have come to conclude at laſt, that there is no certainty in Religion, in ſo much as that they will be ready to laugh at us when we talk to them of Religion, and aſk us of which Religion we would have them to be. And I think it's little queſtionable but that the numerous Iſſue and Company of Atheiſts, Infidels, Scepticks, Papiſts, and Quakers in this Nation, will be found owing, at leaſt in*

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great part, unto the several separations and divisions, which took their rise from but a small beginning at the first. All which things considered, I would appeal to the wisest and best of the Dissenters, whether ever they would have acted so venturously in ways and methods unusual and extraordinary as they have done, had they been able but to have foreseen the sad consequences of it in the instances forementioned, and in exposing the Nation thereby to the danger of the return of Popery. And if not, with what satisfaction can they persist and proceed therein now they have seen the sad events of such doings? Though their good intention and meaning might mitigate, though not excuse their actings extraordinarily, and at all adventures before they knew how sad the consequence of it would prove; yet it is very much to be questioned, whether it will do so now if they still persist in it after they have seen the dreadful effects of it. I greatly fear the dishonour that has been done to the

Christian Religion and the Protestant Cause, both at home and abroad, by these multiplied divisions and separations among the Protestants themselves, is not sufficiently laid to heart, nor that advantage which is made of them by the common Adversary at home and abroad against the Protestant Interest. Nor can I believe, but that if these and other the doleful effects of these separations and sub-separations, were duly considered and laid to heart, it would much abate of that confidence and satisfaction which the several separating parties seem to have in their own ways, and make them willing to make the difference as little as ever possibly they can for the present, and so long after a general reconciliation and union among all Protestants, and willing to accept of any reasonable terms to attain it, and in the mean time to carry it with more modesty and humility than many of them have done, towards those who have not thought fit to make such desperate adventures as they have done.

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These things I cannot seriously think on without grief of heart, nor would mention them now (though they cannot be hid) were it not to provoke the Dissenters to a jealousy in themselves of their well doing, in doing that which hath produced such sad effects, and to put them upon considering whether that can be a good Tree which brings forth such bad fruit. For if it could be but obtained of them impartially to consider the monstrous effects their many separations have produced, and the things by which we have endeavoured to evince, that their so separating has been no matter of necessity or duty, but the contrary, it could hardly fail to startle such of them as have any true sense upon their minds how great a sin it is without very clear and undeniable reasons, to be accessary to the bringing upon the Church such great miseries and calamities, and upon men so much sin, and to Religion so much damage, as has been occasioned by the foresaid separations: Nor could it then fail to encline them

to ſtudy as much how to come to a lawful union with thoſe that differ from them but in ſuch things as are tolerable, as ever they have done to draw themſelves and others into ſeparation, or an unpeaceable diviſion, upon account of difference of opinion about tolerable things. Were there not ſomething worſe which too much prevails amongſt us, than ſuch a ſpirit of humility and Charity, by which the true Diſciples and faithful followers of our Saviour are above all things known, we ſhould not find it ſo difficult a thing as we do, to live peaceably together, and to enjoy comfortable Communion one with another, notwithſtanding our different ſentiments about thoſe things which have little or no influence upon the mind to make men really better in the frame and conſtitution of their Souls, but much worſe when their affection for them is turned into bitter zeal, ſtriſe, and contention, and a deſpiſing of others. If I did not know, or verily think, that men would be no loſers but great gain-

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ers in the true ſpirit of Chriſtianity, by that general Communion I drive at, their other due care and diligence in the uſe of means, and opportunities of receiving and doing good concurring, I ſhould not dare to appear for it as I have done. And now if beſides theſe things, the difficult and dangerous circumſtances we have brought our ſelves into by our diviſions, will not awaken us and make us ſenſible of a neceſſity of uniting as well as we can, if not ſo well as we could wiſh, I know not what will, unleſs a terrible ſcourge by the hand of a common Enemy, which perhaps may make us ſenſible of our paſt folly, if nothing leſs will do it.

I have not you ſee at all inſiſted upon the evil of ſeparation from Parochial Communion, as it runs counter to the Government that forbids it, but only from the evil tendency of it in the nature of the thing, if there had been no humane Law againſt it. And although I could ſay very much to ſhew how much wrong is done to Chriſtianity, when the

beſt Chriſtians, or thoſe that pretend to be ſo, do not manifeſt, that their Religion makes them more averſe than any other men from thwarting the Government they are under, except in ſuch Caſes where the Commands thereof do contradict God's: yet the publick ſcandal brought upon Religion, by our ſeparations, as if we were of ſo many Religions, would have been nothing ſo great as now it is in the ſight of the World, both in this and other Nations, though the Diſſenters had held by-Meetings and Religious Exerciſes, if they had withal continued their Communion in the Pariſh Congregations; but of this I have ſpoken already in my Addreſs. And now I have done, I do expect to be cenſured both on the right hand and on the left, by ſuch as run into extreams on either hand; but am well aſſured, that ſuch are the men by whom the Church has ſuffered moſt, and who are never like to have the honour of healing the wounds which they have made; unleſs they change their minds, and become of

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more moderate and peaceable tempers. And do not doubt, but that one time or other, when the noise is husht, and the storm of passion and furious zeal is over, the still voice of peaceable men will be heard.

These things I thought good to add by way of Preface to the following Discourse, upon this occasion of reprinting it, as most congruous to the design of it. And indeed, I know nothing more conducive to the recovering Peace to the Church in this Nation, than for our Legislators and Governours on the one hand, to do what in prudence they may do towards it, by such alteration and abatements as tend only to healingand no hurt: and for the Dissenters on the other hand to manifest their real and sincere desire of Peace, by accepting reasonable satisfaction. And without such moderation on both sides, as the Case now stands, I see little hope of Peace, notwithstanding all pretend love to it, and blame each other for depriving the Church of it. And for want of this moderation,

deration, and for the manifold ſins which have followed thereupon, I am indeed afraid that we are under the tokens of Gods diſpleaſure at this day, as well as for many other grievous provocations.

What I have ſaid in theſe Papers, tends much to illuſtrate many things in the following Diſcourſe, more briefly touch'd: for which cauſe I have called what I have ſaid herein, a Preface, though diſproportionate indeed in length to the Diſcourſe it ſelf.

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Postscript.

THE *Printers wanting of Copy to fill up this sheet, is the only occasion of this Postscript. In order then to the regaining and preserving Peace in the Church, a thing much designed in the ensuing Treatise; two things would carefully be avoided, to wit, unnecessary scrupulosity in those that are to obey, and unnecessary imposition in those that give Laws. Tenderness of Conscience in refraining from all known sin, though never so small, is very commendable, and so is a care to discern all that to be sin which is so indeed, in order to the avoiding of it. But for men deliberately to scruple things when required, in order to Peace, without being able to give a good reason why, neither commends them nor their Religion. It's true, whatsoever is not of Faith is sin. But then, whatsoever is believed to be unlawful without being able to give some good account of such a belief,*

belief, is superstition. And men should be as scrupulous to make more sins or duties than God has made to be so, as they should be to commit the one or neglect the other of those that are declared to be such by God. Many of mens scruples are owing only to their fancy, which in Religious as well as in other Cases, has a strong operation on the mind, when there is no foundation in reason for it, and reason will hardly satisfy such. And here let me say, that those who imploy their parts and learning in removing such scruples, and satisfying such doubts as are solvable, and thereby settle mens minds and procure Peace in the Church, do make a far better use of their parts and learning than those who imploy theirs, in raising those doubts and scruples in the minds of men, to the unsetling of them, and to the disturbance of the Peace of the Community. For the one tends to lessen the difference among us, and to reduce it into a narrow compass, and by degrees to conciliate and reconcile Dissenters; when as the other

other tends to widen the difference and to keep open the breach; and there is as much difference between them, as there is between healing and wounding.

The other thing to be avoided in order to the Churches Peace, is unnecessary Imposition. By which I mean the imposition of unnecessary things, or at least as unnecessary as conditions of Communion. Such things should never be imposed as conditions of Communion, which tend to division. The Peace of the Church should give Laws even to the Law-givers, as the end does in the choice of means. Things indifferent in their nature, should never be imposed further than will consist with the Peace of the Church. One main end of Ecclesiastical Rules and Orders, is the Peace of the Church: and nothing is more improper to use as a means to attain it, than such an imposition of things as of all other is most likely to hinder it. If it shall be said, so long as nothing is imposed but what is lawful, though not necessary in it self, but

yet

yet convenient for uniformity sake, and as a proof of the governableness of such as are fit to be owned as members of the Church, and admitted to the priviledges thereof; and it may well be hoped that so many as are truly conscientiously scrupulous for the present, will be convinced and satisfied in time by such endeavours as are sufficient to that end. Yet it may be considered withall, that this way and method of reconciling Dissenters, is more uncertain and more hazardous, and not so near and ready a way to come unto so desirable an end as the reconciling Dissenters is, as the taking off some impositions would be, without any hurt to Religion in general, or damage to the just interest of the Church, but much to the advantage of both. For it is a thing well known, that the generality of the people are but little skilled in argumentation pro *and* con *about things controversial, and cannot easily make a judgment on which side truth lies: and we see after many years experience, how little this method of recon-*

reconciling Diſſenters has prevail'd. And whether we can promiſe our ſelves any better ſucceſs in this way for the future than has been found hitherto, is a queſtion would be thought on. The generality of the people among the Diſſenters, I conceive, do much acquieſce in the judgment of thoſe Guides and Leaders whom they moſt affect, touching the things in difference between us and them. Which ſeems to make it neceſſary in order to the reconciling the generality of the Diſſenting people to Parochial Communion, to do ſomewhat alſo for the eaſe of their Leaders and Guides, in reference to their reconciliation likewiſe. And thus I end as I began.

And truly methinks the bad influence our diviſions and hot contentions have upon the ſpirits of men on both ſides, and the great ſcandal which is thereby brought upon our Religion in the eyes of Foreign Nations, and the conſideration of what a bar is thereby put in the way of the unbelieving world againſt their imbracing of our Religion and the

Goſpel

Gospel we profess, should not fail to provoke every man on both sides, who has any love or zeal for the honour and success of his Religion in the World, and for the good of mens Souls, to do what in him lies towards the putting an end to this Church War, besides the many other strong motives which every one knows do perswade and oblige us all to hasten an Union on the best terms we can, if not the best that we could wish. When our blessed Saviour prayed for his Disciples and Followers, that they all might be one, *and for this reason,* that the World might believe that the Father had sent him, *he knew and foresaw that their division would tend to keep the World in unbelief, by obscuring the excellency of his Religion and by rendring the Divinity and truth of it suspected.*

A PERSWASIVE TO *Peace* and *Unity* AMONG CHRISTIANS.

THE deep ſenſe of the very ill effects of our Church-Diviſions hath put me, as it ſhould do every good Chriſtian, upon healing conſiderations. An account of ſome of which I ſhall give in the following Diſcourſe; which I ſhall ground on the words of St. *Paul*, Eph. 4. 3. *Endeavouring to keep the Unity of the Spirit in the bond of Peace.* Which contain that behaviour, in part, by

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which Chriſtians may, and ought to walk worthy of that Vocation to which they are called: Unto which the Apoſtle doth, with the greateſt earneſtneſs, exhort and perſwade them, in this and the two former Verſes. And the words give us occaſion to inquire into two things. 1. What is meant by the Unity of the Spirit. 2. How this Unity is preſerved by Peace, and how we are to endeavour ſo to preſerve it.

1. **What is meant by the Unity of the Spirit?** The Unity of the Spirit is that Oneneſs among Chriſtians, which the Spirit of God worketh, or effecteth by the Goſpel, which is the Miniſtration of the Spirit. For by the Spirits operation through that, Men become one in Faith or Perſwaſion, one in Profeſſion, one in Affection, and one in Communion. And by their Union and agreement in theſe, or the three former of theſe, they become one Body or Spiritual Corporation under Chriſt the Head of it. *By one Spirit they are all Baptized into one Body, and are made to drink into one Spirit*, 1 Cor. 12. 13. —— *For the work of the Miniſtry —— till we all come to the Unity of the Faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God*, Epheſ. 4. 12, 13.

1. They are, by the Spirit, made one

in

in faith or perſwaſion touching the great fundamental truths in the Chriſtian Religion; ſuch as the Apoſtle doth inſtance in, in the three following Verſes: *Even as ye were called in one hope of your Calling: One Lord, one Faith, one Baptiſm, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.* Firſt, they are all called by the Goſpel to embrace Chriſtianity, in *One Hope* of obtaining forgiveneſs of ſins, and eternal Life. Secondly, they all agree in profeſſing Faith in *One Lord Jeſus Chriſt*, as the only Mediator, in oppoſition to *the Lords many*, the many Mediators the Heathen profeſſed to have, and to worſhip, 1 *Cor.* 8. 5, 6. Thirdly, they all agree in the Belief that the Doctrine of the Goſpel by Chriſt, and his Apoſtles, contained in the Holy Scriptures, is a revelation from God touching what Men ought to *believe*, and how they ought to *live*; called the [*one Faith*] and *the Common Faith*, from the Chriſtians unanimous agreement in it, *Tit.* 1. 4. Fourthly, they all agree, and are one in the belief of *One God and Father of all*, in oppoſition to the many Idol-gods worſhipped by others. Fifthly, there is alſo *One Baptiſm*, by which all the Chriſtians, with one conſent, make

profeſſion ſolemnly of their belief in, and Dedication to the Worſhip and Service of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghoſt, into whoſe Name they were Baptized, and by which, as by a ſacred Rite, they are ſolemnly declared to be of the *one Body*, the Church. *By one Spirit are all Baptized into one Body.*

2. They all agree, and are one, in the *Profeſſion* of the *Common Faith*, the fundamental Doctrines of the Goſpel, the belief of which is of neceſſity to Salvation. Which Profeſſion is called *The acknowledging of the truth which is after godlineſs*, Tit. 1. 1. 2 Tim. 2. 25. *The acknowledgment of the Myſtery of God, and of the Father, and of Chriſt*, Col. 2. 2. As with the heart they believe unto Righteouſneſs, ſo *with the Mouth confeſſion is made unto Salvation*, Rom. 10. 10.

3. So far as they are Chriſtians indeed, they are all one in affection, or Brotherly Love. They love all men, even thoſe that are not Chriſtians, with a love of compaſſion, deſiring, and ſeeking their good; but they love their fellow Chriſtians with a ſpecial kind of love, for the appearance of good in them, for their oneneſs with them in the Faith, called, *a loving for the Truths ſake which is in them*,

2 John

2 John 1. 2. And *a loving them in the Faith*, Tit. 3. 15. By which they become *One Heart, and one Soul, knit together in Love*, Act. 4. 32. Col. 2. 2. And hence it is that *Faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, and love to all the Saints*, are frequently joined together in Scripture.

4. All they that rightly be of the Unity of the Spirit, are also one in Communion. One in their Communion in *Grace*, mutually loving one another, and praying one for another: One in Communion in *Gifts*, edifying one another as they have opportunity: And one in Communion in *Ordinances*; communicating together in Ordinances of Divine Worship, Spiritually with all, and locally with those among whom they live; 1 Cor. 10. 17. *For we being many are one Bread, and one Body; for we are all partakers of that one Bread.*

These are the things in which the Unity of the Spirit doth especially consist. Not that I limit it to these only: for it is the work of the Spirit, in the Gospel, to be bringing the Believers to *speak all the same thing, and to be perfectly joined together in the same mind, and in the same judgment*; in the lesser things of Religion as well as

the greater; but their actual agreement lyeth moſtly in the greater.

2. How this Unity is preſerved by Peace, and how we are to endeavour ſo to preſerve it.

Unity in the whole Community of Chriſtians, is preſerved by each member's obſerving the Laws and Rules made for the Government and good Order of the whole in their carriage towards each other. For while every Man acts his own part only, and keeps in his own Rank according to Rule, there is no confuſion, no diſturbance, no diviſion: and peace and confuſion, or diſorder, are put in oppoſition to one another, 1 *Cor.* 14. 33. Chriſt, the Head of the Church, or Spiritual Corporation, hath made ſeveral excellent Laws and Rules, to govern the Members of his Body in their behaviour one towards another, for the common good of the whole, and for the Honour of their Religion, and of him who is the great Founder of it. As that all their things ſhould be done in Charity: That they be gentle and courteous, humble and condeſcending, in Honour preferring one another: That they put on bowels of mercy and kindneſs: That they forbear one another in love: That the ſtrong bear

bear the Infirmities of the weak: That they bear one anothers burthens: That they forgive one another: That they admoniſh, exhort, and comfort one another, as there is occaſion: That they have the ſame care one for another: That they provoke not one another: That they lay no ſtumbling-block in one anothers way: That all things be done to edifying: That they join together in ſolemn Acts of God's Worſhip as they have opportunity: That the Paſtors Teach and Rule the People well, and that the People learn of them, and obey them; and the like.

Now, ſo far as theſe, and other like Laws are kept and obſerved, ſo far Peace and good Order is kept, and thereby Unity preſerved. For there is no rent or diviſion in the Body, till Men break the Laws of good Order. But ſo far as the Laws of good Order in the Chriſtian Community are broken, ſo far the peace thereof is diſturb'd; and to what degree the peace thereof is diſturb'd, to that degree is the Unity thereof weakned, and threatened to be broken, if it be not thereby broken indeed. As for inſtance, in caſe part of the Members of this Community differ in their Opinions from the

reſt, about undetermined circumſtances of Order or Worſhip; ſome holding theſe, and others holding thoſe beſt to agree with general Rules: If then either the one or the other do urge, or impoſe their own apprehenſions, or oppoſe the others that differ from them, to the apparent breach of the great Laws of Charity, and general edification; Then is the Churches peace thereby diſturb'd, and the Unity thereof more or leſs broken; and then eminently ſo, when it proceeds to ſeparation.

But when Chriſtians that agree in the eſſentials of Chriſtianity, do manage all their different apprehenſions about leſſer matters, eſpecially about undetermined circumſtances, and matters of doubtful diſputation, with ſuch Humility, Charity, Meekneſs, Gentleneſs, Tenderneſs, Condeſcenſion and forbearance, as is no ways apt to diſcover in them any ſlighting of their Brethren, or uncharitableneſs towards them, nor is any ways apt to beget ſuch like diſtempers in their Brethren towards themſelves, to the interrupting of their mutual Communion; Then may they be truly ſaid to keep the Unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, though they otherwiſe differ in their thoughts about ſuch

such things: because by such a behaviour they observe the Laws of good Order, provided by our Lord and Master in such cases, as I shall shew more particularly afterwards.

In the mean time, by what hath been thus said in general, you may understand how we are to endeavour to keep the Unity of the Spirit in the bond of Peace; and that is, by a prudent and careful keeping close to the Laws which our Blessed Saviour hath given those of his great Houshold, to govern themselves by, in their carriage one towards another, under all their different apprehensions and opinions in such like things as aforesaid.

And for the manner of endeavouring it; The phrase and manner of speaking, used in Scripture in pressing this duty of Peace and Unity, plainly shews that the preservation or recovery of it, is most industriously to be endeavoured. *If it be possible, and as much as in you lyeth, live peaceably with all Men,* Rom. 12. 18. *Seek peace, and ensue it,* 1 Pet. 3. 11. *Follow Peace with all Men,* Heb. 12. 14. Though it flye from us, yet we must follow after it, and, if it be possible, overtake, and bring it back again. Nay, we are not only to follow after Peace, but also

alſo *to follow after the things that make for peace*, that tend to it, *Rom.* 14. 19. And becauſe this is that which I principally deſign in theſe Papers, I ſhall enlarge my Diſcourſe the more about it. And what I ſhall ſay in ſhewing yet more particularly how we are to endeavour to keep the Unity of the Spirit in the bond of Peace, may paſs under the name of Directions, if you pleaſe.

I. *Direction.*

If we would endeavour it to purpoſe, we muſt lay the Foundation in the peaceable Government of our own Spirits, in Humility and Charity, baniſhing thence ſuch paſſions and evil humours as will otherwiſe betray Men into unpeaceable practiſes, and make them diſturbers of the Churches Peace; and, conſequently, breakers of her Unity.

As firſt of all, we muſt lay aſide Pride, and Vain-glory, and manage all our matters one with another, with lowlineſs of mind, meekneſs and modeſty. For unchriſtian contention which is contrary to Peace, ſprings from Pride and height of Spirit: *Only by Pride cometh contention*, ſaith *Solomon*, Prov. 13. 10. By Pride a Man

a Man over-values himself, and under-values another: He over-values his own understanding, reasoning, and judgment; and as much slights and undervalues anothers. This makes him impatient of opposition, and to think hardly of them that will not bow to his reasonings, and judgment, and say as he says. The immoderate desire to maintain the reputation of his own judgment, of which he hath so high a conceit, makes him overlook, or but slightly consider what is offered by another in opposition to it, or differing from it. And hence arise immoderate and unpeaceable contendings; especially when the parties contending are both sick of one Disease; though the one may have a better cause in hand than the other. This St. *Paul* cautioned the Christians against, *Gal.* 5. 26. *Let us not be desirous of Vain-glory, provoking one another, envying one another.* When Men are ambitious, and vain-glorious, would be thought some body, or to appear considerable in the account of others, every little opposition is apt to provoke their passion: and they in that passion are apt again to say and do that which tends to provoke others. And when the fire is by this means kindled, it is not

not eaſily quenched. For, *Where envying and ſtrife is, there is confuſion, and every evil work*, Jam. 3. 16.

But where Humility, Meekneſs, and Modeſty of mind bear ſway, there the Peace of the Church is in little danger of ſuffering by ſuch. Such will eſteem others better than themſelves, when they are ſcarce their equals: they will have a better opinion of their wiſdome and piety than of their own. And this diſpoſes them to *look, not every Man on his own things, but alſo on the things of others*; and as impartially, and with as much fairneſs to conſider and weigh what is offered by them, as what is offered by themſelves, and to be as willing, and ready to receive, as to give ſatisfaction. St. *Paul* well knew how conducible ſuch a temper is to the peace and tranquillity of the Church, and to the comfort and benefit of Church Communion, when he ſaid, *Let nothing be done through ſtrife, or vain glory, but in lowlineſs of mind let each eſteem other better than themſelves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man alſo on the things of others*, Phil. 2. 3, 4. And if, after all this fairneſs of proceeding to give or to receive ſatisfaction, there yet remains a difference in judgment about things

things which are not of the essence of Christianity, yet there will be no unpeaceable striving, nor contending, no ill and provoking reflections among such as are of this humble, and modest temper; but they will quietly, and patiently bear with one another in Love, as knowing themselves not to be infallible. *The Servant of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle unto all Men, patient, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves, shewing all meekness to all men*; 2 Tim. 2. 24, 25. Tit. 3. 2. It was said of our Lord himself (who was meek, and lowly in heart) that *he shall not strive, nor cry, neither shall any man hear his voice in the streets*; Mat. 12. 19. And if this way of proceeding will not reconcile the different-minded to our judgment, when we have truth on our side, much less will any thing that we can do in a more imperious, and passionate way of proceeding. For *the wrath of Man worketh not the Righteousness of God*: It is no fit Instrument or Tool for that Work, *Jam.* 1. 20. Whereas by a patient, and peaceable forbearance, not only Unity in affection and Communion is preserved, but many times the dissenting party won upon, and brought to a better understanding. *By long forbearing is a Prince per-*

perſwaded, and a ſoft Tongue breaketh the bone, Prov. 25. 15.

And as for Charity, there is nothing qualifies a Man more to keep the Unity of the Spirit in the bond of Peace than this. The ſeveral properties of it as deſcribed by St. *Paul*, in 1 *Cor.* 13. 4 —— 7. do, as it were, conſpire, and naturally tend to promote peace and good agreement. To what degree Charity dwells in any Man, to that degree it diſpoſeth him to *ſuffer long*, and to forbear revenge; to be *kind*, and ready to do good: and indiſpoſeth him to *envy* others in what they excel him; to *vaunt himſelf*, or to be *puffed up*; or to *behave himſelf unſeemly*, or unbecomingly in word or deed, or to *ſeek his own*, with neglect of others benefit; or to be *eaſily provoked*: or to think or ſurmize *evil*, or to Interpret things to the worſt ſence, or to rejoice in anothers halting, though an Adverſary: but inclines him to *rejoice in the Truth*, and when right takes place: It enables a Man to *bear with all things* in another ſo far as is conſiſtent with his and the general good: to believe all things that are any wayes credible, that tend to excuſe or commend others: To *hope all things*, and not to deſpair, but that a Neighbour may by

by Charitable endeavours be recovered, though he hath miſcarried: and to *endure all things*, labour, pains, and many inconveniencies to himſelf, ſo he may but be ſerviceable to others. And if theſe be the properties of Charity, well may it be called the bond of perfectneſs, and Chriſtians exhorted above all things to put it on. How can it be thought, that they can ever divide, or ſeparate, in whom Love with theſe properties dwells?

And as Charity is of a healing, ſo it is alſo of a comprehenſive Nature: I can ſcarce propoſe any endeavours properly uſeful to keep the Unity of the Spirit in the bond of Peace, but more or leſs of theſe properties of Charity will be found in them. And it is ſo univerſally uſeful for the right conduct of all affairs in the Church, that St. *Paul* gives it in charge thus, (1 *Cor.* 16. 14.) *Let all your things be done with Charity*: a line and vein of this ſhould run through all. And if all Chriſtians had but this *ſalt in themſelves* (to allude to *Mark* 9.) it would ſo ſeaſon their converſe, that they would *have peace one with another*.

Where there is entireneſs of affection and a peaceable correſpondence among Chriſtians, it makes them unwilling to differ

differ from one another in judgment or practice. There is ſuch a *comfort in Love* (as the phraſe is, *Phil.* 2. 1.) that it makes them very unwilling to admit of any difference that may diminiſh that comfort, or weaken that love. And this diſpoſeth them *to look, not on their own things only, but alſo on the things of others*, and to weigh, without prejudice or partiality, what each offers to other; which is the way to have the weaker brought over to the ſtronger, in any thing wherein they differ. And in this way doth the Church *edifie it ſelf in love*, Epheſ. 4. 16. *Being knit together in love, even unto all riches of full aſſurance of underſtanding*, as the phraſe is, *Col.* 2. 2. And indeed, it is a common thing for one Man to be brought over to anothers judgment through affection to him, being prepared thereby to give his reaſonings the greateſt liberty and ſcope in his judgment. Whereas, on the contrary, it is a ſtrong temptation to Men to differ from them in judgment and practice, from whom they have departed in affection. St. *Paul* could eaſily believe there were diviſions in the Church of *Corinth*, when he fore-knew there would be Hereſies among them, the one being the fore-runner of the other, and

and a leſſer difference making way for a greater, as by ſad experience we have ſeen in our days, 1 *Cor.* 11. 18, 19. St. *Paul* obſerved it in ſome, who having firſt *ſwerved from Charity, they quickly turned aſide unto vain jangling*, 1 Tim. 1. 5, 6. Whereas Love is the bond of perfectneſs, as it is called; it is the ſtrongeſt bond, it holds the parts longeſt, and faſteſt together, *Col.* 3. 14. It being a Maſter grace, and of a benign Nature, it hath a kindly influence upon a mans judgment and whole practice. As *the integrity of the upright doth guide them*, ſo will their Charity too. *He that loveth his Brother abideth in the light, and there is no occaſion of ſtumbling in him*, 1 Joh. 2. 10. It is doubtleſs then more for want of love than want of light, when the Unity of the Spirit is not kept in the bond of peace.

This then is the firſt Direction: that we would by a diligent uſe of all good means and motives, cheriſh and nouriſh Humility and Charity in our minds and Spirits, as principles of ſuch a peaceable behaviour, as directly tends to preſerve Unity in the Church.

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II. *Direction.*

This Unity is to be endeavoured to be kept in the bond of Peace by all good Chriſtians, by their being careful to abſtain from *deſpiſing and cenſuring* one another upon account of their different apprehenſions about the leſſer things in Religion, ſo long as they are agreed in the main. Unleſs theſe be forborn in ſuch caſes, it's next to an impoſſibility to preſerve peace and Unity among them. Theſe unchriſtian practices, as they are the effects of pride and uncharitableneſs, ſo they are, and have been two great peace-deſtroyers, and Church-dividers. There is, and ever hath been, and will be different meaſures of knowledge, underſtanding, and grace in the ſeveral Members of the ſame Body: Some are weak in the Faith, and ſome ſtrong; ſome Babes, and ſome ſtrong Men. Upon account of which difference of knowledge and grace, differences are apt more or leſs to ariſe among them. The weak are apt to be more ſcrupulous than the ſtrong, as being more in the dark, and ſo apter to ſtumble. Whereupon the ſtrong, if they be not reſtrained by Humility and Charity, are apt to deſpiſe them when they cannot make

make them understand what is plain and evident to them themselves. And the weak, again, if they be not restrained by Humility and Charity, are apt to judge and censure the strong, as if they were not so conscientious, because not so scrupulous as themselves. And upon this despising and judging one another, the bond of peace is broken, and a way prepared for dividing. For when the weak see themselves neglected, slighted, not regarded, and set at nought by the strong, it discourages them, and takes off the pleasure of their Society and Communion, and makes them weary of it, and becomes a temptation to them to forsake it, and to follow any opposite party that will head them. And when the strong, again, find themselves judged and censured by the weak, as if they were Men of little Conscience, they are apt to look upon themselves as being, by such prejudice taken up against them, put out of a capacity of serving them; which becomes a temptation to them to neglect them, and somewhat to estrange themselves from them: Or, however, though that temptation should not prevail so far upon them, yet all endeavours of the strong to help and cure the weak, are by the prejudice which

the weak have againſt them when they once fall to judging them, made very much ineffectual; ſo miſchievous and baneful to the Churches Peace and Unity is proud deſpiſing, and uncharitable cenſuring one another.

This was the caſe between the believing Jews and Gentiles, upon which the firſt conſiderable breach we read of brake out in the Chriſtian Church; of which we have an account in *Act.* 15. and *Rom.* 14. and other places. The believing Jews durſt not uſe ſuch liberty in meats as the believing Gentiles did: nor did the believing Gentiles think themſelves obliged to be circumciſed, and to obſerve Jewiſh Feſtivals, as the believing Jews thought they were. Hereupon the believing Gentiles which underſtood their Liberty, deſpiſed the believing Jews when they could not make them underſtand it too. And the believing Jews, on the other hand fell to judging the believing Gentiles as looſer than themſelves, and as Men of no Conſcience, becauſe they did not make Conſcience of Meats, and days, and of Circumciſion, as well as themſelves. And upon this unchriſtian carriage of one towards another under the different apprehenſions in theſe things, great

diviſions,

diviſions, ſidings, and diſturbances among them did enſue.

Now that all ſuch deſpiſing and judging one another, and dividing from one another about their difference in leſſer matters of doubtful diſputation, ſhould be forborn by Chriſtians, ſo long as they agree in the eſſentials of Chriſtianity, St. *Paul* declares, upon theſe two grounds, among others.

1. Becauſe upon the Common Faith wherein they were both agreed, they were at the firſt received by the Lord into his Church, and ſo into a near Relation to himſelf. And therefore their after-differences which did not deſtroy that Foundation upon which that Relation was firſt built, were no ſufficient ground of deſpiſing, or judging one another, or of dividing, or withdrawing one from another. This is plainly ſet down in theſe words: *Let not him that eateth, deſpiſe him that eateth not; and let not him which eateth not, judge him that eateth, for God hath received him*, Rom. 14. 3. And this reaſon is farther backed and urged again, Chap. 15. 7. *Wherefore receive one another, as Chriſt alſo received us to the glory of God.* Thoſe whom God hath received into his Church upon ſuch and ſuch

grounds, we may not, we ought not to diſcourage, or reject, by deſpiſing, or judging, or withdrawing from, ſo long as that remains in them upon which God at firſt received them. Which holds in all other caſes of difference between Chriſtians that agree in the main, as theſe did, as well as in this between the believing Jews and Gentiles. It is upon the like reaſon and ground that our Apoſtle, in the words upon which I found my diſcourſe, and thoſe following, (*Epheſ.* 4.) preſſeth upon Chriſtians the great duty of endeavouring to keep the Unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, *viz.* becauſe they were at firſt incorporated into one Body by a profeſſion and acknowledgment of one God and Father of all, of one Lord Jeſus Chriſt, of one Holy Spirit of the Father and the Son, of one Doctrine of Faith, of one Hope, of one Baptiſm. Which fundamental points believed and lived to, are ſufficient to Salvation. And if ſo, they are ſufficient bonds of Union, and boundaries of Communion, whatever difference in leſſer things may otherwiſe occur. For more, in profeſſion, cannot be abſolutely neceſſary to Church-Communion, than what in reality is abſolutely neceſſary to Salvation.

tion. For as the one doth constitute the Church as invisible, so doth the other the Church as visible. And the same thing which constitutes the Church as visible, must needs invest the Members thereof in a right to its external priviledges. And if the Church had kept this her ground upon which she was first built, and not made more conditions of Communion, she had never been cut, mangled, and torn into (I know not how many) pieces, as she hath been, and at this day is. And I see not any probability of her recovery to her primitive Union and Communion, till she return to this her first Foundation of Union, and boundary of Communion. But a return to this would quickly do it, if all Christians would acquiesce therein. And why they should not as well as the primitive Christians [the best Christians that ever the World saw] did, I understand not, nor ever could hear any good reason to make me understand it.

2. St. *Pauls* other reason, why Christians that agree in the main, as aforesaid, should not despise, or judge, or withdraw from one another, for their differing in lesser things, is this: because both parties differing but only so, are to be presumed, in the judgment of Charity, to aim

at the pleaſing of God in what they differently hold and do. For Charity, according to which we are to guide our ſelves in all ſuch caſes of difference, *thinketh no evil*, but *believeth*, and *hopeth all things* concerning others, in the beſt ſence and conſtruction their Actions are capable of. This was the caſe of the believing Jews and Gentiles; they both aimed at the pleaſing of God even in thoſe things wherein they differed. *He that regardeth the day, regardeth it to the Lord; and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard it. He that eateth, eateth to the Lord,* (ſaith he) *for he giveth God thanks; and he that eateth not, to the Lord he eateth not, and giveth God thanks,* Rom. 14. 6. Both aimed at the approving themſelves to God in their contrary ways. And if the Lord in ſuch a caſe will not deſpiſe, or judge ſuch an one, ſo as to condemn him, though under a miſtake but of that Nature, as certainly he will not, but pity and pardon him, (for *he hath compaſſion on them that are ignorant, and out of the way*) much leſs ſhould we, who are fallible our ſelves, and *compaſſed about with infirmities. Who art thou that judgeſt another mans Servant?* (ſaith our Apoſtle) *to his own Maſter he ſtandeth*

eth or falleth: every one of us ſhall give an account of himſelf to God: Let *us not therefore judge one another any more*, ver. 4, 12, 13. for that is a judgment belongs not unto us. *There is one Law-giver, and one Judge*; who art thou that judgeſt another? *Jam.* 4. 12. That is, what doſt thou make thy ſelf to be, that dareſt to undertake ſuch a thing?

And as we ſhould be afraid to judge one another, ſo we ſhould of deſpiſing one another in any caſe like that before mentioned; for our Saviours ſerious caveat againſt it, argues it to be both much againſt his mind, and of dangerous conſequence to our ſelves and others: *Take heed that ye deſpiſe not one of theſe little Ones*, Mat. 18. 10. He knew that his little Ones, becauſe but little Ones in knowledge and grace, that have little of theſe to render their fellowſhip much deſirable, are apt to be neglected and ſlighted, and to be thereby diſcouraged, and turned aſide: he therefore cautions thoſe that are ſtronger, to take heed leſt they ſhould be betrayed into any ſuch carriage towards them as ſignifies their ſlighting of them. Our Saviour had ſhewed before, how ſad a thing it would be for any Man to be inſtrumental in turning any

weak

weak Chriſtian aſide by any undue carriage towards him, when he ſaid, in ver. 6. *Wo be to the World becauſe of offences*, &c. *and wo be to him by whom the offence cometh.* And it would be far more Chriſt-like (of whom it is ſaid, *He ſhall not break the bruiſed Reed, nor quench the ſmoaking Flax*) to uſe more care, pains, and tenderneſs towards the weak and feeble, to preſerve and increaſe that little ſpark of Chriſtianity in them, though it be no more, and though there be no more appearance of it, than there is of fire when only ſmoak can be diſcerned, than towards thoſe that are ſtrong, and do not ſtand in ſo very much need of tenderneſs in our carriage, and applications to them. Which alſo agrees excellently well with St. *Paul*'s Metaphorical Diſcourſe, in 1 *Cor.* 12. 23, 24, 25. *Thoſe Members of the Body, which we think to be leſs honourable, upon theſe we beſtow more abundant honour, and our uncomely parts have more abundant comelineſs. For our comely parts have no need: but God hath tempered the Body together, having given more abundant honour to that part which lacked, that there ſhould be no Schiſm in the Body:* implying, that certainly there will be, where ſuch care, and tenderneſs of proceeding

ceeding is not used towards such as are least accounted of in the Church. *Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees, and make straight paths for your feet* (by removing all discouraging impediments out of the way) *lest that which is lame be turned out of the way, but rather let it be healed: looking diligently, lest any fail of the grace of God*, Heb. 12. 12, 13, 15. How far all parties of Men among us have made themselves guilty of breaking the Peace and Unity of the Church, by this unchristian despising, and judging one another, concerns them to consider; and the guilty to repent of what is past, and to reform for time to come, that they may not be judged and condemned by God for what they have done. That's the second Direction.

III. *Direction.*

Those that would keep the Unity of the Spirit in the bond of Peace, must be careful to forbear all hard speeches, and ill reflexions on them that differ from them; especially tale-bearing, backbiting, and whispering. They must make no ill representation of one another behind their backs, by raking up,

and

and then ſcattering abroad all the evil they can, or whatever may tend to the diſparagement, or reproach of ſuch as differ from them. Becauſe, if they ſhould be guilty herein, though they may think thereby to weaken the Reputation of the Cauſe they oppoſe, yet in truth they will be ſo far from reconciling their Opponent to *their* Cauſe, as that they will thereby diſhonour it, and render it the more ſuſpected; and Communion with themſelves ſo much the leſs deſirable, and all their own arguings the leſs available, and byſtanders the readier to fall in with thoſe of a better behaviour, as judging thereby their Cauſe to be better, though in it ſelf it ſhould be worſe: for a good Cauſe may be ſpoiled in the handling. All ſuch unchriſtian carriage tends to exaſperate, imbitter, and provoke the Spirits of their Opponents, both againſt them and their Cauſe, and to widen the breach more and more, and to ſet them at the greater diſtance, and to make them the more irreconcilable. *A froward Man ſoweth ſtrife* (ſaith the Wiſe man) Prov. 26. 28. *Grievous words ſtir up anger, and the forcing of wrath bringeth forth ſtrife: and the words of a tale-bearer are as wounds*, Prov. 15. 1. and 26. 22. and 30. 33. So true it is that

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the wrath of man doth not work the Righteousness of God, Jam. 1. 20. It is not for the interest of the Truth, nor doth it any ways advantage the cause of God. No, if any Man would see any good effect of his endeavours towards the Uniting of Men, if he would see the Seed he sows come up; let him be sure to avoid all harsh and unpeaceable proceedings therein. *The Fruit of Righteousness is sown in Peace of them that make Peace*, Jam. 3. 18. *The Servant of God must not strive, but be gentle to all*, 2 Tim. 2. 24. As we must follow Peace with all Men, *Heb.* 12. 14. so, in order thereto, we must *speak evil of no Man*, Tit. 3. 2.

IV. *Direction.*

In Order to our keeping the Unity of the Spirit in the bond of Peace, we must study rather to agree with, than to differ from one another: and be more sollicitous to find out what will bring us nearer together, than what will set us at a greater distance. And this is one way of *following after the things which make for peace*; and of *studying to be quiet*; to both which we are exhorted, *Rom.* 14. 20. 1 *Thes.* 4. 11. And to this end, I shall recommend these three things.

1. To

1. To make Conſcience of endeavouring as truly and ſincerely to find out what may make us of their mind that differ from us, if it be to be found out, as what may tend to make them of our mind. We ſhould be as much afraid of offending againſt the publick Peace, and Charity of the Church, as againſt Truth; of being guilty of Schiſm in practice, as of error in judgment; and take as much pains to keep our ſelves from a cauſleſs differing from others, as to make them agree with us.

2. That we do as impartially weigh what thoſe that differ from us do offer for our ſatisfaction, as what we our ſelves do offer to ſatisfie them. In doing of which we ſhall in part diſcharge that duty enjoined us, in *Phil.* 2. 4. Look not every Man on his own things, but every Man alſo on the things of others. And by this we ſhall make it appear, that we are willing to agree with thoſe that differ from us, as far as poſſibly we can, as far as any reaſon or ground appears to bear us out in ſo doing. And if we herein begin to thoſe which differ from us, it will induce them, if there be any candor in them, to return the like to us. And this is the way to reduce the difference to a narrow compaſs,

pass, and to make it as little as may be. And when it appears to be but little, it will be the easier to satisfie one another about it: or, however, we shall then be the better able peaceably to bear with one another in it. But if this be not done, it will beget a suspicion that we affect to differ, and to strive for Victory more than for Truth and Peace; and that it is more from a spirit of contradiction than Conscience, that we differ.

3. When any alter their judgment either upon grounds found out by their own search and studies, or offered to them by others, so that they come over to them in whole, or in part, from whom they differed before, then beware of representing this as matter of *Odium* and reproach to them, so long as they are not worse in their Morals. The contrary, that is, the doing so, hath been an ill practice, and such as hath tended greatly to block up the way of a due, and Christian compliance with them from whom, through mistake, they have once professedly differed. While it hath been represented as matter of reproach to Men, not to stand their ground, and to be true to their principles they have once received, though found erroneous enough when

when better conſidered and looked into, it hath proved a great temptation doubtleſs unto many, to neglect an impartial and thorow-examination of the grounds of their Opinion or practice, and to be prejudiced againſt all that is offered by others to convince them of miſtake. Mens Reputation among their party is a dangerous ſnare to hold them faſt in error, and a great impediment to their underſtanding, and diſcerning the Truth when it is declared to them, when it tends to draw them off, and to expoſe them to reproach among their party, and a great prejudice and bar againſt their receiving and owning of it. *Why do ye not underſtand my ſpeech? Even becauſe ye cannot hear my word*, ſaid our Saviour to the Jews, *John* 8. 43. They had no mind to embrace his Doctrine, which would bring them into diſgrace with their party, the Phariſees, and therefore they had no mind ſo to conſider it, as to underſtand it. Which made our Saviour ſay again, *How can ye believe which receive honour one of another, and ſeek not the honour that cometh from God only?* Joh. 5. 44. But if Men would but underſtand, and conſider that it is truly honourable, and praiſe-worthy in the ſight of God, and Wiſe Men, to love and

and own Truth where ever they find it, and however disguised by its Adversaries, and to be of open and free minds to consider, and try all things, and when they discover Truth, to buy it at any rate, though it cost them more than the loss of their Reputation among an erring party; they would then neither fright others, nor be scared themselves from exchanging error for Truth, Schism for Peace and Unity, by reproachful nick names.

V. *Direction.*

Those that would keep the Unity of the Spirit in the bond of Peace, had need to be of publick Spirits, and still to seek their own personal and private satisfaction in subordination to a publick good, and not in opposition to it: to prefer the publick Peace and Unity of the Church, and the benefits that depend thereon, before the pleasing of themselves in things not absolutely necessary, but convenient only. If this be not observed, there will be no avoiding divisions and separations. And the Reason hereof is taken from the different apprehensions, capacities, and tempers of the several parts and Members of the Church. By

reaſon of this, thoſe circumſtances about the adminiſtration of Holy things, which will beſt pleaſe ſome good Men, will not ſo well ſatisfie others. This we find to be true by the different uſages of the parts of the Reformed Church in ſeveral Nations, and by the different perſwaſions and inclinations of the parts of the Church in one and the ſame Nation, yea, in one and the ſame City, Town, and Pariſh, as is well known. So that, if one part of the Church ſhould refuſe Communion with the other in the ſame Ordinances, unleſs they can have them adminiſtred upon terms beſt pleaſing to themſelves; and if the other part of the Church, of a different opinion therein, ſhould do ſo too; ſeparation follows of courſe, till they can all be of one mind in thoſe diſputable things.

But in all ſuch caſes the publick concerns of Religion ſhould ſway more with us, than what otherwiſe would be more to our liking. The profit of the whole is more to be attended, than the pleaſing of our ſelves, when the queſtion is not, which is good, and which is ſimply bad, this or that? But only, which is better, this or that? St. *Paul* walked by this Rule, in bearing with, yea, in chuſing

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some things for publick edification sake, when circumstances made them necessary thereunto, which out of those circumstances he would not have chosen, nor could well bear with. *Even as I* (saith he) *please all Men in all things, not seeking my own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved,* 1 Cor. 10. 33. Under some circumstances he would forbear things, which under others he would not: and thus he would *eat no meat while the World stands, rather than make his Brother to offend.* He chose to labour with his own hands for his support, rather than to take Money from others when he saw the interest of the Christian Religion would be disadvantaged thereby. And he Circumcised *Timothy*, purified himself, and took on him a Vow, after the Jewish mode, when so to do tended to publick good, though otherwise the doing of such things could not be without some regret to him, considering how slightingly he speaks of them at other turns. And thus he took up and laid down many things, even as the publick interest of Religion led him to it. To them that were under the Law, he became as one under the Law; and as without *Moses*'s Law to them that were without it: and all this

he reckoned to be conſiſtent with his being *under the Law to Chriſt*. To the weak he became as weak, that he might gain the weak: he was made all things to all men, but it was *for the Goſpels ſake*, as he ſaith; and that he might by all means ſave ſome: it was, that he might gain the freer paſſage and readier reception of the Goſpel, for the Salvation of men, 1 *Cor.* 9. 2. 23. And accordingly he exhorted others to walk by the ſame rule, and to conſider, and do, what would beſt conſiſt with publick benefit, rather than what would beſt pleaſe and gratifie themſelves. *We that are ſtrong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to pleaſe our ſelves*, Rom. 15. 1. Look not every man on his own things, but every man alſo on the things of others, *Phil.* 2. 4.

If Chriſtians on all hands among us had but acted and walked according to this rule; nay, if the diſſenters would but have done it when the other could not be prevailed with; the publick intereſt of Religion would not have been expoſed to that loſs and dammage as it is at this day. And therefore, as that publick benefit which might have been procured, and ſecured by ſuch yielding and condeſcending as circumſtances made not only Lawful,

but

but necessary, might have been a forcible motive so to have done: so the publick dammage and mischief which a non compliance under our circumstances tends to, may, and ought also to be a powerful dissuasive from maintaining, and continuing our distance upon such slight grounds as those are which have brought us to it. For such a distance tends to keep open a wide breach in the Body of the Nation, to the weakening of it, and rendering it obnoxious to the Envy, ill will, or ambition of any publick Adversary; or to create one if there were none: it tends to the dishonour and reproach of the Nation: it tends to weaken the Protestant Interest, and to bring a scandal and reproach upon our Religion it self, and to put an Advantage into the hands of the Adversaries of it: it tends to lay a stumbling-block in the way of such as are Atheistically inclined: it tends to distract, and unsettle the Peoples minds about the more necessary points of Religion; or, at least, to divert them from the serious practice of them: and it tends to the distraction of Christian Charity. And that which tends to any one of these, tends to a publick hurt and dammage, how much more that which tends to them all?

And in good ſadneſs, are the things on either hand about which we differ, of ſuch neceſſity or value, as that for the ſake thereof the publick intereſt of Religion, and of the Nation, ſhould run ſuch hazards, and ſuſtain ſuch apparent damage by contending for them as they do? Or, can it be thought, when ſeriouſly conſidered, that God, who hath ſaid, *I deſired Mercy, and not Sacrifice; and the knowledge of God rather than burnt-offerings* (which yet were his own inſtitutions) is ſuch a lover of thoſe things which are but circumſtances of inſtitutions at moſt, wherein our difference as to communion of private Members lies, as that he had rather the intereſt of Religion in the main, and of National Societies of Men ſhould deeply ſuffer, than that thoſe circumſtances ſhould be either waved, or born withal? Me-thinks, thoſe who have not Love and Zeal enough for Religion to be reſtrained from ſuch dividing wayes and practices as evidently tend to its great prejudice, ſhould yet be reſtrained therefrom upon account of their own ſecular intereſt, as that is expoſed thereby to great hazards, as that is involved in the common Fate of the Nation; always remembring who hath ſaid, *A Nation divided*

divided against it self, is brought to desolation.

VI. *Direction:*

Those that would keep the Unity of the Spirit in the bond of Peace, had need to be careful not to impose upon their Christian Brethren, as conditions of Communion, things of doubtful disputation, or which are not some way necessary to further the great ends of Religion. Because, though some such things may not be unlawful in themselves, yet so long as they are thought to be so by many, it will occasion a breach, as experience shews that from time to time it hath done. And when the imposition of any thing that is apt to do so, may be forborn without any detriment to Christianity in its end or means, without any dishonour to God, or wrong to Mens Souls; it seems altogether incongruous, then to impose it. When the believing Gentiles would impose upon the believing Jews to use the same Liberty in Meats which they themselves did, when those Jews were perswaded it was unlawful for them so to do: and when, again, the believing Jews would impose upon the believing Gentiles

the obſervation of days, and other legal Rites which the Gentiles ſcrupled, and that they fell to judging one another hereupon; St. *Paul* interpoſed, and directed, and perſwaded them, that inſtead of this, they would judge this rather, as better becoming them, that *no man put a ſtumbling-block, or an occaſion to fall in his Brothers way:* that they would not by impoſitions, tempt one another to do that which they could not do with ſatisfaction of Conſcience, or elſe to ſeparate: And to put one another upon a neceſſity of doing either the one or the other, argued great uncharitableneſs, *Rom.* 14. 13. And when he had, in *Ver.* 1. exhorted the ſtrong to receive the weak into their Communion, he cautions them, that by no means they would trouble them with matters of doubtful diſputation.

That agreement of Chriſtians in the ſubſtance of Doctrine and Worſhip, upon which they became one Body at the firſt, is doubtleſs ſufficient, without any addition, to continue that Union in Communion. And upon this very thing was the Communion of the Apoſtolical Churches Founded: And the going off from this, and the adding ſuch conditions of Communion as are not found in

 Scripture,

Scripture, hath been Fatal to the Churches Peace, and that which hath, from time to time, broken it into pieces. Men should always make choice of means fitted to their end. And therefore those who design the establishing of Peace and Unity in the Church, should beware of imposing such things on their Brethren as are like to prove a bone of contention, when they may be forborn without prejudice to any. The contrary many times proves (as I have said) very mischievous to the Church. As Parents tempt their Children to withdraw that reverence and obedience which is due in things necessary, by imposing upon them unnecessarily, out of humour; (against which they are cautioned, *Col.* 4.) So Mens greater Extravagancies in the Church, frequently take their first rise from the imposing of such things on them which might well have been forborn.

In the choice of Circumstances about Worship wherein there is a liberty of choice, it would always, for Peace and Unity sake, be considered, what the People are able to bear: a thing which our first Reformers had an eye to; and *Moses* would never have permitted divorce, but that the temper of the people led

led him to it: *He ſuffered it for the hardneſs of their hearts.* Our Saviour alſo in his conduct had reſpect to the capacity and temper of the People; he preached to them *as they were able to bear*, Mar. 4. 33. And did forbear to declare many things to his Diſciples which he had to ſay, *Becauſe they could not bear them then*, John 16. 12.

Chriſtians of all Capacities, whether their ſtanding be higher or lower in the Church, are to do nothing to one another, but what doth well conſiſt with Love. The precept is Univerſal both in reſpect of Perſons and things: *Let all your things be done with Charity*, 1 Cor. 16. 14. *By Love ſerve one another*, Gal. 5. 13. *Forbearing one another in Love*, Epheſ. 4. 2. The very ſeverities of Excommunication are to proceed from Love to the delinquents ſoul; *That the Spirit may be ſaved in the day of the Lord Jeſus.* And therefore nothing ſhould be impoſed that ſavours of want of Love or tenderneſs; No burdening of one anothers Conſciences, but rather *bearing one anothers burthens, and ſo fulfilling the Law of Chriſt*: Imitating St. *Paul*, who ſaid, *I was gentle among you, even as a Nurſe cheriſheth her Children.* And without doubt, this is the beſt

best method to preserve and increase Peace, Love, and Unity, and the edification of the Church; *Eph.* 4. 16. Edifying it self in Love.

VII. *Direction.*

Those that would endeavour to keep the Unity of the Spirit in the bond of Peace, as they ought, must not so contend on any side for external circumstances about the administration of holy things, as thereby to expose the substantials of Christianity, Peace, Charity, and Unity, to ruine and destruction. For the preservation of that which is most essential to the keeping of the Unity of the Spirit, as Peace and Charity are, is more to be endeavoured, than the retaining what is but circumstantial to it, as a more or less convenient mode of Administration is. The Unity of the Spirit may be kept in the use of a less convenient mode of Administration, when a more convenient cannot be had without the loss of Peace, Charity, and Unity: but the Unity of the Spirit cannot be kept where Peace and Charity are banished.

Peace, Charity, and Unity, are duties of

of a higher Nature than circumstances about Administrations that are not absolutely necessary, but only more convenient. To love our Neighbour as our selves, is *the Royal Law*, (Jam. 2. 10.) one of the two great Commandments, (*Mat.* 22. 39.) *the fulfilling of the Law*, (Rom. 13. 10.) *the more excellent way*, (1 Cor. 12. 31.) greater than Faith or Hope, 1 *Cor.* 13. last ver. And so, Peace is that in which, together with Righteousness, and Joy in the Holy Ghost, the Kingdome of God consists, (*Rom.* 14. 17.) and which is to *Rule* in our hearts, and to over-rule in many Cases, *Col.* 3. 15. Charity and Peace are great Moral duties, in which much of the Christian Religion, in the power of it, doth consist, as being that wherein a Man most resembles God, and by which God dwells in him, and he in God, 1 *Joh.* 4. 16. And when these fall into competition with circumstances relating not to the being, but only to the better constitution of Churches and Ministry, and the Administration of Ordinances in a better mode, and to the better exercise of discipline and government; they are to give place to Peace, Love, and Unity; and not Peace, Love, and Unity, to them.

1. Because

1. Because those are but means subordinate and subservient to these as their end: and the means, as such, are no farther useful than they are serviceable to their end. Which may be the reason why washing of Saints feet, the kiss of Charity, the anointing the Sick with Oyl in the Name of the Lord, have been disused, though otherwise once enjoyned.

2. Those controverted points about the betterness of wayes and modes of Administration, on which side soever the Truth falls, are not things wherein the glory of God, the Honour and success of Religion, and the good and Salvation of Men are so much concerned, as they are in the great duties of Love, Peace, and Unity, and what depends upon these: and therefore it must needs be a duty of a higher Nature, and of greater obligation, to secure and promote Love, Peace, and Unity, which are the greater, than the betterness of Modes of Administration, which are but the less. And a Man's duty in the less is to be pleaded only in subordination to his duty in the greater, but never in opposition to it. And therefore well might St. *Paul* say, [*above all these things*] *put on Charity, which*

which is the bond of perfectneſs, Col. 3. 14. And St. *Peter* likewiſe: [*above all things*] *have fervent Charity among your ſelves*, 1 Pet. 4. 12. And if above all things, then above the circumſtances relating to the conſtitution of Churches, to Miniſtry, Adminiſtration of Holy things, and diſcipline. I might both amplifie, and exemplifie this, and over-prove it, in ſhewing how that duties which become ſo only by inſtitution, are always to give way to Moral duties, when they come in competition. *I will have Mercy, and not Sacrifice*, Hoſ. 6. 6. Mat. 9. 13. and 12. 7. *Go, and be firſt reconciled to thy Brother, and then come and offer thy gift*; Mat. 5. 24. Circumciſion waited upon, and was ſuſpended, upon a Moral neceſſity, forty years in the Wilderneſs, being intermitted ſo long, *Joſh.* 5. Now then, if poſitive precepts themſelves are ſuperſeded by Moral, when they come into competition; then ſo are thoſe things much more which are but circumſtances relating to inſtitutions, and ſuch circumſtances too, as that it is matter of diſpute among Wiſe and good Men on both ſides, which, whether theſe or thoſe, do beſt agree with the Nature and ends of thoſe inſtitutions.

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Now, that our dividing, ſeparating, and running into parties, upon the account of the leſſer things fore-mentioned, does tend to the decay and deſtruction of Love, as well as Peace and Unity, is a thing too apparent in our own experience, to need proof. That which is an occaſion of ſeparation, will certainly leſſen, if it do not quite deſtroy Love. The Law of Commandments contained in Ordinances, which was a Wall of Separati n, or partition, between Jews and Gentiles, is called the *Enmity*, Epheſ. 2. 15. Becauſe, as it did ſeparate them, it was the cauſe of enmity, and laid waſte Charity, as all ſeparation upon a Religious account ever hath done, more or leſs. And to deny this, whatever one of late hath ſaid to the contrary, is to contradict the general ſenſe and experience of Men. And therefore what is our dividing upon the terms before deſcribed, but a Method of ſeeking to purchaſe little things in Religion with the loſs of great? Of ſecuring Circumſtances, with the loſs of ſubſtance; of obtaining ſuppoſed conveniencies, with the loſs of what is certainly, and abſolutely neceſſary: it is as if they ſhould have Robbed the Temple to build a Synagogue. And I fear this will be found an

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ill way of trading with our Maſter's Talents, and ſuch as will turn but to a bad account, when profit and loſs is computed. The want of a due care to prefer Charity before things leſs conſiderable, hath betrayed many a one into that which St. *Paul* calls vain jangling, 1 *Tim.* 1. 5, 6. *The end of the Commandment* (ſaith he) *is Charity, from which ſome having ſwerved* (or not aiming at, as it is in the Margin,) *have turned aſide to vain jangling.*

VIII. *Direction.*

To the keeping of the Unity of the Spirit in the bond of Peace, it's greatly neceſſary to take heed of dividing Principles. Becauſe theſe eſpecially are the ſpring of irregular motion, of breaking aſunder inſtead of Uniting. There are indeed other cauſes of unlawful diviſions and ſeparations; but they ſcarce ever proceed to any height in producing ſuch effects, without this. Pride, Self-conceitedneſs, Uncharitableneſs, and affectation of ſingularity, are alſo cauſes of this evil: but theſe uſually Act under the colour of ſome one or more miſtaken Principles. I ſhall inſtance in ſome of them, and inſiſt the

the longer upon them, because they are the Weapons in which Church-Dividers do usually put their trust. Some of them relate to the qualification of Church-Members, and the constitution of Churches: some to the Worship performed in Churches; and some to the Magistrates Authority enjoining that Worship. I shall begin with what concerns the qualification of Persons of which Churches are constituted.

I. *Dividing Principle to be avoided.*

That Churches Founded in Infant-Baptism, are not to be held Communion with.

This tenet is built upon a supposition that Baptism administred to Infants is a *Nullity*, is invalid, and no Baptism, and that therefore Churches made up of Pædobaptists, are no true Churches. To this I have two things to say. 1. That they of this way, will never be able to prove Infant-Baptism a Nullity. 2. That if they could prove it an errour, yet they cannot prove it to be an errour of that Nature, as will be a sufficient ground of separation.

First, They will never be able to prove

it a Nullity, and till they do prove it to be ſo, they will never be able to juſtifie ſeparation upon account of it. For if they pronounce them no true Churches, and renounce Communion with them upon that account, they muſt prove their charge, or lye under the blame of a falſe accuſation, and an unjuſt ſeparation. It lyes on their part to prove their refuſing Church-Communion with ſuch, to have a ſufficient ground to juſtifie their practice. If ever they prove Baptiſm adminiſtred to the Infants of Believers to be a Nullity, it muſt be, 1. By diſproving their Church-Relation. And, 2. By proving their excluſion out of Chriſt's Commiſſion to Baptize; and thirdly, by proving that the ends of Baptiſm are not attained, when adminiſtred to them. And that they are never like to do this, conſider what I have to offer to make you think ſo.

1. That they cannot diſprove ſuch to be of the Church. If they ſhould attempt it, I have two things to lay in their way.

1. Firſt, that the ſame Jewiſh Children which were viſibly of the Church immediately before their Parents became Chriſtian at the firſt, con-

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tinued to be so after. The reason of which assertion is this; Because they were not under the dischurching cause of as many of the Jews as were dischurched, and that was unbelief, and wilful disobedience in rejecting the Gospel; of which they could not be guilty by any Act of their own, or of their Parents, as imputed to them. *Because of unbelief*, saith St. *Paul*, *they were broken off*, Rom. 11. 20. See also *John* 8. 35. If it be said they were dischurched in the dissolution of the Jewish Church-state in general; it is but an evasion which will not help them: for the fore-cited Text is flatly against them. For all that were not broken off by unbelief, did continue unbroken off; that is, they still kept their place and standing in the Church of God. And therefore to assign any other cause of dischurching any than the Scripture hath assigned; or, at least, any other without this here assigned and determined by the Apostle, is too great presumption, and such as will not satisfie an impartial mind.

Secondly, our Saviour hath declared, little Children to be of the Church, when he said, *of such is the Kingdom of Heaven*, Mat. 19. 14. If any by Kingdome of

Heaven have a mind to underſtand it of the Kingdom of Glory, yet they may remember, that none are of the Kingdom of Glory, who were not firſt of the Church, firſt of the Kingdom of Grace here. So that it comes all to one, underſtand it of which you will.

If they ſhall ſay, that by *Such*, here is not meant ſuch in age, but ſuch in quality, ſuch as are like Children in Humility and Innocency: The ſcope of the place, and the purpoſe to which the words are applyed, will not ſuffer them ſo to underſtand them. For the words, Of ſuch is the Kingdom of Heaven, are our Saviour's reaſon by which he would take off his Diſciples from hindering little Children, properly taken, from being brought unto him, and of juſtifying their practice that brought them. *Suffer little Children to come unto me, and forbid them not*, ſaith he, *for of ſuch is the Kingdom of Heaven.* And if we ſhould underſtand by ſuch, not ſuch Children properly, but Men, like ſuch in quality, we deſtroy the force and ſence of our Saviour's reaſon, and render it wholly inconſequent. For it doth not follow at all that becauſe the Kingdom of Heaven is of other Perſons like little Children in ſome other things, but altogether

altogether unlike them in what was the matter of exception against their being brought to Christ, which was their minority or infancy, that therefore little Children properly understood, ought to be suffered, and not forbidden to be brought to Christ. Such a rendring the sence would fasten a fallacy of four terms on our Saviour's words, of putting one thing in the premises, and another in the conclusion, as you will see if you cast them into a syllogism.

Besides, our Saviour plainly declared the Relation of little Children to himself, when, at another time, he taking a little Child, said, *Whosoever receiveth* [this] *little Child in my Name, receiveth me*, Luk. 9. 48. For how could a little Child be received in his Name, if it were not visibly related to him? To receive one in Christ's Name, and to receive one because he belongs to Christ, is one and the same thing, *Mark*, 9. 41.

1. If such Children then are of the Church, and Related to Christ; to Baptize them, cannot be proved unlawful. And the reason is, because the same thing which qualifies any Persons for Church-Membership, qualifies them for Baptism. And Baptism is a sacred Rite of Christi-

anity inſtituted by Chriſt, ſolemnly to publiſh and declare ſuch to be of the Church as are Baptized: it is a Chriſtian badge to declare to whom they do belong. There is one Body, and one Baptiſm for all of that one Body, *Epheſ.* 4. 4, 5. 1 *Cor.* 12. 13.

2. If the Infants of believing Parents be of the Church, it cannot be proved that they are excluded out of Chriſt's Commiſſion to be Baptized, *Mat.* 28. 18. And the reaſon is plain, becauſe they can never be diſproved to be Diſciples of Chriſt in one ſence or other, that are viſibly of the Church. For the Church is Chriſt's School: and all that are of the Church, are Chriſt's Scholars. If they ſay, Infants are no Diſciples, becauſe they are not in a capacity to learn; I anſwer. Although they are not in the propereſt, and neareſt capacity to learn, yet it doth not therefore follow, that they are in no ſuch capacity of it, as that they may be called, and reputed to be Diſciples, or Learners. The Scripture uſeth to reckon, or impute the doing of things to Children, when yet they have been but in as remote a capacity of doing thoſe things themſelves, as they are of Learning. Thus little Children were

were ſaid to enter into Covenant, *Deut.* 29. 11, 12. to keep Covenant, and to break Covenant, *Gen.* 17. 10, 14. And the Children of the *Kohathites of a month old*, were ſaid to *keep the charge of the Sanctuary*, Numb. 3. 28. And *Levi* to pay Tithes in *Abraham*, while he was yet in his Loins, *Heb.* 7. 9, 10. Doubtleſs, they were ſaid to do theſe things, either becauſe they did them virtually in their Parents, as being morally one with them until they could chuſe for themſelves; Or elſe, becauſe they were under viſible Circumſtances of being certainly taught by their Parents to do them themſelves, when they ſhould be in the neareſt, and propereſt capacity ſo to do, and to own what their Parents had done on their behalf in the mean time, as much as if they had done it in their own Perſons. But for whether of theſe reaſons, or for both, or for any other they were ſaid to do ſuch things while but Children, for the ſame reaſons may little Children while but ſuch, be as truly ſaid to be Diſciples or Learners. And upon one account or other, Children as well as Parents, are called Diſciples, in *Act.* 15. 10. Where ſome urging the neceſſity of the Gentiles being Circumciſed after the manner

of *Moſes*, that is, to be proſelyted by Circumciſion, is called, a laying a yoke upon the neck of the Diſciples. Seeing then, the manner of *Moſes* was to Circumciſe Proſelytes, both Fathers, and Male Children, and the preſſing the continuance of this among all Gentiles Proſelyted to Chriſtianity, is called, a putting a yoke upon the neck of the Diſciples; it is impoſſible to prove but that the Children, as well as the Fathers, are meant by the Diſciples, upon whoſe neck the yoke would have been laid, becauſe it is manifeſt they, as well as their Fathers, were the Perſons, whoſe Circumciſion was urged as neceſſary. For theſe reaſons I conclude they will never be able to prove little Children to be no Diſciples: and if not, they can never be able to prove them excluded out of Chriſt's Commiſſion for Baptizing Diſciples.

3. They cannot prove that the ends of Baptiſm are not attained when Adminiſtred to Infants of Believing Parents. Firſt, One great end of Baptiſm, is to ſignifie to all Men by viſible ſign and repreſentation, the ſame thing which Gods Covenant in the Goſpel doth by Word. Baptiſm conveys to the mind by the ſenſe of ſeeing, the ſame thing as the word of the

the Gospel doth by the sense of hearing, which is the Covenant of Salvation, or the terms on which God hath promised to save Men. Christ's Death, Burial, and Resurrection, as the means by which pardon and Salvation are conditionally obtained for, and promised to all Men, are signified in Baptism. And our dying unto sin and rising to a new Life, as the condition upon which that pardon and Salvation are promised, are likewise signified in Baptism. Hence we are said to be buryed with Christ in Baptism into Death, and to be raised with him, *Rom.* 6. 3, 4, 5, 6. *Col.* 2. 12. And to be saved as by a figure by Baptism, as it signifies the Resurrection of Christ, and the answer of a good Conscience, 1 *Pet.* 3. 21. And because the substance of the new Covenant is represented in Baptism; thence it is that Baptism is called the sign of the Covenant. And because it is an institution of God to assure Men that upon the terms signified by it, they shall be pardoned, and saved, thence it is called the Seal of the Covenant, as Circumcision for the like reason was. For Circumcision was a sign to signifie upon what condition God promised Men to be their God, and a Seal to assure them that upon

upon their performing that Condition, he would be their God. And the Condition ſignified was Circumciſion in the Spirit, as St. *Paul* expounds it, *Rom.* 2. 28, 29. that is, mortification, or the change of the heart, the ſame for ſubſtance with the new Birth, repreſented in Baptiſm. But then Baptiſm no more than Circumciſion, doth ſignifie that all that have received it, have performed the Condition of the promiſe of Salvation therein ſignified, but to aſſure them and all others, that upon the performance of it, the benefits promiſed ſhall be conferred. For the ſign of the Covenant doth not ſignifie more to Men than the Covenant it ſelf: and the Covenant it ſelf doth not ſignifie to Men that they have performed the Condition of it. As to this end then, as Circumciſion was of a publick and common uſe to the Females as well as the Males, though they were not circumciſed themſelves; ſo is Baptiſm much more both to the Perſons themſelves who are Baptized, and to all others, as well when it is adminiſtred to Children, as when to Men of riper years.

2. Another end of Baptiſm is to oblige the Perſons Baptized to perform the Condition of the Covenant in being born again,

again, of making them new hearts, and becoming new Creatures, as ever they hope to receive the benefits of pardon and Salvation, promised in the Covenant upon that Condition. It is from this Obligation that a holy Life is frequently pressed upon Christians from their having been Baptized, and that it is called, the *Baptism unto Repentance*, Rom. 6. Col. 2 and 3 Chap. Mark 1. And Baptism can be no less an Obligation to Repentance and a Holy Life when administred to Infants, than Circumcision was in like case: and yet St. *Paul* said, that whosoever was Circumcised, was bound to keep the Law, *Gal.* 5. And those Baptized in their Infancy, if when they come to years of discretion, do prove such as make Conscience of their own personal Obligation, they usually take themselves to be as much obliged by their Infant-Baptism, as they do who are Baptized at years of discretion, and discharge it as well. All which considered, Infant-Baptism cannot be proved a Nullity as to this end neither.

3. Another end of Baptism, if it be not the same with that before mentioned, is a solemn dedication of the person Baptized, to the Worship and Service of the

the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, called a being Baptized in the Name, or into the Name of Father, Son, and Holy Ghoſt, *Mat.* 28. And is not ſuch an Act done by Parents as obliging to their Children, as that of the Jews was when *they took upon them, and decreed for their Seed, that they ſhould keep the days of Purim?* And as that of *Sampſon*'s Parents was in devoting him to be a *Nazarite* from the womb, *Eſt.* 9. 27, 28, 31. *Judges* 16. 17. Or, as the Parents Covenant with the *Gibeonites*, was to their Children after them. Or, as *David*'s and *Jonathan*'s was to their Seed, 1 *Sam.* 20. 42. Or, as the Fathers Act in Circumciſing his Child, was obliging to the Child afterwards to keep the Law.

4. Another end and uſe of Baptiſm is ſolemnly to declare ſuch to be of the Church, who are Baptized, and to ſignifie their right to Church-priviledges, and as the Chriſtian badge to be a mark of diſtinction between compleat Members of the Church, and thoſe which are not; even as Circumciſion was of old. Infants are as capable of theſe ends by Baptiſm, as they formerly were by Circumciſion.

If it be ſaid, there may be other ends of

of Baptism that cannot be attained in Infants Baptism, as they may in the Baptism of those of riper years: yet, if this be granted, it will not therefore follow, that their Baptism is a Nullity, so long as other ends of Baptism are attained thereby. It might as well be said, that more ends of Circumcision were attainable in the Circumcision of grown Proselytes than of Minor Proselytes: but if there were, it did not make their Circumcision Null. Our Saviour did not by his Personal Baptism profess Repentance and Mortification of any sin of his, and belief of pardon of it, (as many others did of their sins in their Baptism) because he had none to repent of, to mortifie, or to be pardoned: and yet I hope none will say his Baptism was a Nullity. And if the absence of such a profession did not make his Baptism a Nullity, how can it be proved that the absence of it will make the Baptism of Infants to be a Nullity? The absence of one end of Baptism, doth no more make it useless as to all other ends, and, consequently, no more a Nullity, than all such Marriages are Nullities where procreation of Children, which is one end of Marriage, is not attainable.

Now

Now then, conſidering what hath been ſaid about Infants Church-Membership, and Diſciple-ſhip, and the attainableneſs of the ends of Baptiſm in their Baptiſm, I appeal to all who are not over-grown with prejudice and partiality, whether ever Infant-Baptiſm be like to be proved to be a Nullity: And if not, whether ſeparation upon ſuppoſition that it is, be not a cauſleſs rent in the Church, which is Schiſm in the formality of it.

But beſides all this, I have another thing in the ſecond place to ſay, and that is, that if Infant-Baptiſm could be proved an errour, yet it can never be proved to be an error of that Nature as will of it ſelf, and without any other cauſe, be a ſufficient ground of ſeparation, as to other Acts of Church-Communion. To make this out, I ſhall take one thing for granted, which I believe very few, if any, of the Anabaptiſts will deny, and that is, that many, at leaſt, of the Pædobaptiſts are godly, both of Men and Women. *They are Sanctified in Chriſt Jeſus, called to be Saints, and ſuch as call upon the Name of Jeſus Chriſt our Lord:* and theſe, and ſuch like Characters are Churches deſcribed by in the Epiſtles, which

which the Apostles wrote to them.

1. I reason thus then: If Pædobaptists are godly Men, such as believe in Christ, then they are Members of Christ: and if they are Members of Christ, they are of his Body, the Church: and if they be of the Church, then they have right to Communion with the Church, and they that deny it them, deny them their right: Because Union with the whole, creates a right to Communion with the parts in all Bodies, Natural, Political, or Mystical. The Ministration of Gospel Ordinances, which is given by Christ for the Edification of the whole Body, belongs to every part, *Ephes.* 4. 12. 1 *Cor.* 3. 21, 22, 23.

If it be said, though such Pædobaptists have a remote right, yet without Baptism after Faith they cannot have an immediate right to Church-Communion: I answer, that Baptism after Faith, can be no more necessary to Church-Communion, than it is unto Salvation. For the means cannot be more necessary to the subordinate end which is Church-Communion, than it is to the principal, which is Salvation. And Baptism is necessary to Salvation but by way of duty where opportunity occurs, but not by way

way of means where opportunity of doing ones duty is wanting. And if to be Baptized after Faith, were indeed the Pædobaptiſts duty, the true reaſon why they do not perform it, is the want of a Moral opportunity, that is, the want of conviction that it is their duty, they verily believing they were ſufficiently Baptized in their Infancy, and that it is not Lawful for them to be re-baptized. And all the while they remain under this perſwaſion, they can no more lawfully receive an after-baptizing by a voluntary ſubmiſſion to it, than they can who deſire to be Baptized, but want the opportunity of that health, or ſuch an adminiſtrator, as is neceſſary thereto. And if their right to Salvation under theſe Circumſtances, be not cut off, as doubtleſs it is not for the reaſon before given, then no more can their right to Church-Communion be thereby cut off for the ſame reaſon. I think I may very ſafely ſay, that there is no errour in judgment about Baptiſm, nor about any other thing, which yet is conſiſtent with ſaving Faith and Love, and not pertinaciouſly perſiſted in after conviction, for which a Man can duly be deprived of Church-Communion, that doth not by his volun-

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tary separation deprive himself of it: which persisting in errour after conviction is not the case of the honest-minded Pædobaptists, though they should be supposed to be in errour. Persons erring upon no worse terms, are, doubtless, the objects of Christian forbearance in the Church, and not of such severity as to exclude them from Communion. This you may take as a further account why I said Baptism after Faith can be no more necessary to Church-Communion, than it is unto Salvation.

2. If very many of the Pædobaptists are such godly Persons, and true Believers in Christ, as are afore described, then it cannot be denied but they are such whom the Lord hath received into Communion with himself: and if so, then those who are likewise his People, ought to receive them into their Communion too; *Rom.* 14. 1—3. *Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, for God hath received him*; Rom. 15 7. *Wherefore receive ye one another, as Christ received us.* If it be said, these Scriptures concern such as were duly Baptized: I answer, That the reason why they should receive one another, is not fetcht from their having been Baptized, but from the Lord's receiving them. And

no ſuppoſed errour in Perſons about Baptiſm, can be a reaſon why they ſhould not be received to Communion, farther than it is a reaſon to prove that the Lord hath not received them. St. *Peter* thought it a good reaſon why the Chriſtians ſhould make no difference between believing Jews and believing Gentiles, though they were of different perſwaſions about the neceſſity, and non-neceſſity of Circumciſion (wherein the one erred) becauſe the Lord made no difference, but gave to one the Holy Ghoſt as well as to the other, and purified the hearts of the one by Faith as well as the other, *Acts* 15. 8, 9. His reaſon is not fetcht from the Nature of the things wherein they differed, but from God's giving them an equal intereſt in his Grace notwithſtanding their difference. When God had vouchſafed the gift of his Grace and Spirit to the Gentiles as well as to the Jews, St. *Peter* thought that if after this he ſhould have kept the ſame diſtance from them as before he thought he was bound to do, he ſhould have withſtood God in ſo doing, *Act.* 11. 17. *For as much then as God gave them the like gift, as he did unto us, who believed on the Lord Jeſus Chriſt; what was I, that*

I could withstand God? To keep at a distance from those to whom God draws nigh in the Communication of his Grace and Spirit, is, it seems, to steer a course against God, or to withstand him.

3. The Anabaptists and Pædobaptists, if Godly, do by Faith hold Communion one with another in eating the same Spiritual meat, and drinking the same Spiritual drink, the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ, which is the thing signified in the Lord's Supper: *Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink his blood, ye have no Life in you*, Joh. 6. 53. And therefore they cannot duly deny Communion with them in the Lord's Supper it self, which is the sign.

1. Because if they do, they thereby cross one great end and design of God in that Ordinance; which is to increase and strengthen Love and Unity among Christians in communicating together in the sign, upon account of their joint-interest in, and Relation to Christ, the Substance. Christians by their Communion in that Ordinance, are made *to drink into one Spirit*, or, into one-ness of Spirit, *1 Cor.* 12. 13. But by their thus refusing to Communicate one with another, they do not only sin in not using

the Lord's appointed means to increaſe and ſtrengthen Love and Unity upon account of common intereſt in the ſame Saviour, but alſo in that by ſuch their refuſal, they deſtroy Unity, and weaken and diminiſh Love: they pull down inſtead of building up, ſteer a contrary courſe to Chriſt in appointing that Ordinance.

2. Men's right to the ſign, proceeds upon the beſt account from their right to the thing ſignified, though not from that only. As thoſe who have right to ſuch or ſuch an Eſtate in Land, have thereby a right to the deeds and evidences by which ſuch a right is to be declared: So thoſe that have a right to the Body and Blood of Chriſt through Faith, have thereby a right to the Lord's Supper, as an evidence appointed by God, by which ſuch their right is to be declared and acknowledged. And therefore as a detaining of ſuch evidence from him who by having right to the Land, hath right to the evidence, would be an injury: even ſo for any as much as in them lies to detain the Lord's Supper from them who by having right to the Body and Blood of Chriſt, have right to the Lord's Supper as an evidence and ſign thereof, would be an injury likewiſe, and that ſo much greater too,

too, as Spiritual things are of more value than temporal.

3. It is absurd, and against common reason for them to grant that the Godly Pædobaptists have Communion with them in the greater and better part, and yet for a supposed errour consistent with saving Faith and Love, to deny it them in the less, when as the greater always includes the less. But for the Godly Pædobaptists to be partakers of like precious Faith with them, and thereby to eat of that Flesh which is meat indeed, and to drink of that Blood which is drink indeed, together with themselves (a thing which the Anabaptists will not deny) is certainly to have, hold, and enjoy Communion with them in the greater, better, more spiritual, and more substantial part of Communion; and therefore to deny it them in the out-side and letter of it, which is far less considerable, is very incongruous and contradictious.

What was objected by distinguishing between an immediate and remote right, if it should be here brought in again, hath been answered before, and the answer need not be repeated, but only applyed here. And let it be remembred always, that there is a vast difference between

those who deny, and those that hold the necessity and usefulness of water Baptism in these latter Ages of the Church. The Pædobaptists are as much for water-Baptism as the Anabaptists are, and hold themselves as firmly engaged by their Infant-Baptism, as they do by their after-Baptism. If this were not so, their case would not be so pleadable as now it is.

And for any to separate from them upon account of their being Baptized in their Infancy, as it is without ground from Scripture, I conceive, so it is without all president in the Church of Christ for the first fifteen hundred years and more. Though some in the ancient Church were Baptized in Infancy, and some at Age, yet there was never any breaking of Communion among them upon that score so far as ever I could learn, until a Reformation of a Reformation was set on foot; the one to puzle and confound the other: I mean, the attempt of the Anabaptists in *Germany* to Reform the Reformation by *Luther* and others. Which may be a motive to reflect upon what they have done, and to review their grounds. Can they think to out do the Church in her purest times in point of Communion? Me-

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thinks they ſhould greatly ſuſpect themſelves in their undertaking, wherein they go ſo manifeſtly contrary to the Univerſal Church in all places and Ages till ſo lately, as afore-ſaid.

II. *Dividing Principles to be avoided.*

That it is unlawful to hold Communion with Parochial Congregations, notwithſtanding they have been Baptized into the Profeſſion of the true Faith, and continue in that profeſſion. This is another grand dividing Principle indeed. They who hold this and practiſe accordingly, muſt prove ſuch Communion unlawful, or elſe lye under the guilt of a ſinful Schiſm, or cauſleſs ſeparation, and of all the evil and miſchievous effects and conſequences of it. And to prove it unlawful, they muſt prove it is ſo, either by proving, 1. That all the Members of each Parochial Aſſembly from which they ſeparate, are deſtitute of ſaving grace; or, 2. By proving that the mixture of bad with good, makes Communion unlawful; or, 3. By proving the conſtitution of ſuch Congregations bad, upon account of that diſtribution by which the whole Nation is divided into

its parts and precincts; or, 4. By proving the worſhip in thoſe Aſſemblies, to be ſuch as may not lawfully be joined in. Theſe contain either all, or the principal pretended cauſes of a ſtated ſeparation from them. For the plea upon account of the inſufficiency of ſome Miniſters, is a thing but of an accidental Nature, and no Univerſal pretence of ſeparation. And whether they are like to prove all, or indeed any of theſe, you may pleaſe to conſider what follows, and then judge.

1. They cannot prove all the members of each Parochial Aſſembly from which they ſeparate, to be deſtitute of ſaving grace, much leſs to be ſo ſcandalous as to deſerve Excommunication. For,

Firſt, There is ſo little a difference between common grace, and the loweſt degree of ſpecial and ſaving grace, as makes it impoſſible for one Chriſtian to know another to be deſtitute of ſaving grace, the tenor of whoſe Life is not worſe than theirs, who are the moſt inoffenſive and beſt diſpoſed in the Pariſhes. And if they cannot make proof that they are all deſtitute of ſaving grace; then,

2. It's utterly againſt the rules of Charity, indeed of all Chriſtianity, to judge

judge such to be destitute of saving grace, of which they cannot make certain proof. For *Charity thinketh no evil*, but *believeth all things, and hopeth all things*. And for one Man to judge another to have no grace, or to be in a damnable condition who is not manifestly guilty of living in such sins as for which the Scripture expresly excludes Men out of the Kingdom of Heaven, is a thing which the Scripture expresly condemns as a great sin. Mat. 7. 1. *Judge not, that ye be not judged.* Jam. 4. 12. *Who art thou that judgest another?* And again, *Who art thou that judgest another mans Servant?* Rom. 14. 4. And can they prove indeed (or will they undertake it) that all the Inhabitants of this or that Parish without exception, are guilty of such sins, as for which the Scripture doth expresly bar Men out of the Kingdom of Heaven? And if not, dare they judge them all to be in a reprobate or damnable condition? And if they dare not, or cannot judge so without manifest breach of Charity, then to be sure they cannot prove that they are so: And if they cannot prove it, what a horrid thing is it, or would it be to judge whole Parishes by the lump to be such?

3. I query how they will prove it is of abſolute neceſſity unto Lawful Communion with a Congregation that have been Baptized into one Body the Church, that at leaſt ſome of them ſhould be ſavingly holy? As ſuppoſe the Church of *Laodicea* for inſtance had conſiſted all of ſuch as had only a form of Godlineſs; will they ſay, and prove it when they have done, that Communion with them had been unlawful? I ſuppoſe they will not, and am confident they cannot.

2. They cannot prove that a mixture of the bad with the good makes Communion with ſuch mixt Aſſemblies unlawful. They can neither prove it by Scripture prohibition, nor by Scripture Example.

1. Let them ſhew where the Scripture forbids it. If they ſay there, where it ſaith, *If any Man that is called a Brother be a Fornicator, or Covetous, or an Idolater, or a Railer, or a Drunkard, or an Extortioner, with ſuch an one no not to eat*; 1 Cor. 5. 11. And where again it ſaith, *Withdraw your ſelves from every Brother that walks diſorderly, and the like.* The Anſwer is ready, which is this; That theſe, and all other Scriptures of like Nature, are to be conſidered, either firſt, as injunctions upon the

the Church as invested with the power of Discipline; or, secondly, as commands to particular Persons a-part. So far as they belong to the Church in a publick capacity, and as invested with the power of discipline, they impose the duty of using the power of the Keys for the Reforming and Cure of the scandalous, and for preventing contagion in the Church. But so far as they respect Persons in a single and private capacity, they prohibit personal familiarity and converse thereby to discountenance their evil, and to work them to a sense of it, and to caution others against it; and to secure themselves from the infection of it. But then there is a vast difference between abstaining from a personal familiarity and converse with such, and a withdrawing from the Church for the sake of such: this is a sin, but the other a duty.

And whereas some have alledged the 2 *Cor.* 6. 17. *Come out from among them*, &c. This was no call to the better sort of Christians to separate from the worser, and such as were scandalous in the Church of *Corinth*, but a call to those that had in part embraced the Gospel, to come quite off from Heathenish Idols, and from participating in the Sacrifices which

which were offered to them: which is meant by *touch not the unclean thing*, there. This appears by the Context from ver. 14. and by comparing herewith, 1 *Cor.* 8. 7, 10. and 10. 7, 14, 21, 22.

Others alledge *Revel.* 18. 4. Come out of her my People, *&c.* If this be meant of Myſtical *Babylon*, as they underſtand it; It is not a call to ſeparate from thoſe that Worſhip the true God only, and in the Mediation of Chriſt Jeſus only, as the Pariſh Churches Proteſtant do; But from her who is ſtiled a Harlot, becauſe ſhe gives that Honour which is due only to God, and to our only Mediator Chriſt Jeſus, to Creatures and to other Mediators together with God and with Chriſt. When it can be proved our Pariſh Churches do ſo, then, and not till then, will this Text be pertinently alledged to juſtifie ſeparation from them.

2. Let them ſhew, if they can, ſome approved Example in Scripture of ſuch a practice. That there have been great ſcandals in the Churches, both in that recorded in the Old Teſtament, and thoſe recorded in the New, is manifeſt, as is ſhewed particularly and at large by Mr. *Baxter* in his fifth *Direct. for Cure of Church-*

Church-divisions. But where do we find any of the better sort in those Churches, withdrawing themselves from the more carnal part, into separate Bodies, for Reformation sake? We read indeed of some that *went out from the Church, because they were not of them*; and of some that did *separate themselves being sensual, not having the Spirit*; but not a word of the good separating from the Church because of the bad in it. In the Church of *Sardis* which *had a Name to live, but was dead*, there were but *a few Names*, but what had *defiled their Garments*. And those few indeed are commended, and encouraged by promise of great reward, for that they had kept their Garments undefiled amidst such a Society, but not in the least encouraged to separate from them, though all the rest were defiled.

They plead indeed, that particular Churches ought to consist of none but of visible Saints, because this is agreeable to the primitive patern: the appellations or Titles which are given the Churches in the Epistles the Apostles wrote to them, declare them to have been such when they say *to the Saints in such and such a place*. This is not denied, but the Question is upon what account they were esteemed visible

viſible Saints, and were ſo ſtyled? As whether it were, 1. Becauſe there were ſuch ſpecial poſitive ſigns of ſaving Grace, beſides their common profeſſion of Chriſtianity viſible in all the Members of thoſe Churches, as that there was juſt cauſe they ſhould be ſtiled Saints upon that account? Or, 2. Whether the whole were not denominated from the better part? Or, 3. Whether it was not becauſe they were all Saints by an outward Calling and Profeſſion.

1. It is no ways probable they had all ſuch poſitive ſigns of ſaving Sanctity upon them, as that they were all ſtiled Saints upon that account. Sure it was not for this cauſe that St. *Paul* ſtiled thoſe of the Church at *Corinth* Saints, 1 *Cor.* 1. 2. 2 *Cor.* 1. 1. When at the ſame time he ſaith there was *ſuch Fornication among them as was not ſo much as named among the Heathen*, Chap. 5. 1. that there were ſome of them, *that with Conſcience of the Idol did eat of the Sacrifice offered to it*, Chap. 8. 7. that at the Lord's Supper *ſome were hungry, and ſome drunk*, for which with other profanations of it, many of them had been viſited with ſickneſs and Death, Chap. 11. that *ſome among them had not the knowledge of God*, and

and *did deny the Resurrection*, Chap. 15. that *he feared that when he should come among them, he should not find them such as he would, but that he should find debates, envyings, wraths, strifes, back-bitings, whisperings, swellings, tumults among them, and some that had not repented of the uncleanness, and Fornication, and lasciviousness which they had committed*, 2 Cor. 12. 20, 21. These things according to St. *Paul*'s account, in *Gal.* 5. 19, 20, 21. were rather signs of such as shall not inherit the Kingdom of God than of saving Grace. I doubt those who plead the primitive pattern for admitting none into their separate Churches but who are under positive signs of saving Grace, would be unwilling to receive such for visible Saints as here we have found among those to whom St. *Paul* writes as to Saints. But if Persons under such Characters as aforesaid, passed with St. *Paul* for visible Saints upon one account or other, how comes it to pass that those of our Parishes that make the same profession as the Church of *Corinth* did, will not pass for visible Saints too upon the same account, be it what it will? Is it because they are under worse Characters than those already mentioned? I trow

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not, but rather becauſe they are partial that ſtick at it.

2. If they will ſay they were all denominated Saints from the better part among them in the Church of *Corinth*, and other Churches, then why may not our Parochial Congregations be ſo too? Unleſs they will ſay there is none good among them, and prove what they ſay, which to be ſure they can never do, if they had hearts to attempt it. But this cannot be the reaſon why they are called Saints, becauſe theſe two phraſes, *the Church of God which is at* Corinth, *and the Sanctified in Chriſt Jeſus*, are of equal latitude and extent, and both refer to all the ſame perſons, as appears by the words themſelves, which are theſe. *Unto the Church of God which is at* Corinth, *to them that are ſanctified in Chriſt Jeſus, called to be Saints:* the latter words being exegetical of the former, 1 *Cor.* 1. 2.

3. If they were ſtiled Saints upon account of their external Calling by which they were ſeparated from the Pagan and Infidel World and Worſhip, unto a profeſſed belief in, and obedience to the Father, Son, and Holy Ghoſt, into which they had been Baptized, then our Parochial Congregations conſiſt of viſible

visible Saints too as well as those: For they have been Baptized into the same Faith, and continue to profess it: And by that profession are separated from the Infidel and Pagan World. So that let our Opponents in this point take it in which sense they will, yet they will never be able to prove but that our Parochial Congregations are visible Saints upon the same account, and in the same sense, in which those of the Church of *Corinth* were stiled Saints.

And it is most probable that the primitive Churches were stiled Saints upon this last mentioned account of an outward calling and profession of Christianity. Saints with them signified but the same thing as Christians now doth with us, and was the common appellation by which the Professors of Christianity were distinguished from others then, as Christian is now. Where they were once called Christians then, they were twenty times called Saints, if we may estimate their usage by what is recorded. For we have the appellation Saints above threescore times in the New Testament, and that of Christian but thrice, as I take it. They were called Saints, as it is, *Rom.* 1. 7. 1 *Cor.* 1. 2. For the two words [to be]

are added by the Translators in both places. You will never find I suppose the appellation, Saints, applyed to the sincere in opposition to the unsincere of the Church, as by Custom now they are, but always in opposition to those that were not at all of the Church, or which made no profession of Christianity at all. It was, I take it, in this sense, and by virtue of an outward Calling and Profession, that those were said to be *Sanctified by the blood of the Covenant*, who yet by Apostasie *trod under foot the Son of God, and counted that Blood an unholy thing*, Heb. 10. 29. All that were outwardly called so far as to profess Christianity, were called to be Saints, Saints by Calling. Our Saviour hath told us over and over, that many are called, and but few are chosen: it's well if there be not abundantly more nominal than real Saints. The whole Body of the People of the Jews by virtue of an external Calling to Worship the true God, and to receive and observe his Law, were called *Saints*, and a *Holy People unto the Lord*, Deut. 33. 2, 3. and 7. 6. And a Congregation of such are called a *Congregation of Saints*, and Assemblies of such, *Assemblies of Saints*, Psal. 89. 5. 7. and 149. 1. And yet we know what sorry

Saints

Saints many of them appeared to be. And St. *Paul* seems to reckon the Church of *Corinth* and other Churches to consist of somewhat alike mixture as that of the Jews of old did, when he told them that they were Types of us upon whom the ends of the World are come, and admonished them by God's sore displeasure expressed against most of them: And would by no means have them ignorant or unmindful of one thing, and that was, that those with whom God was not well pleased, but overthrew them in the Wilderness, were of God's Church, and enjoyed special priviledges, as well as they themselves: which priviledges he expresseth in terms more appropriate to their present Christian state, when he saith, they were all Baptized unto *Moses*, and did all eat the same Spiritual meat, and drank the same Spiritual drink. By whose example he would have them take warning, and not be flattered into a good opinion of themselves meerly upon account of their Baptism and holding Communion with the Church in Holy Administrations, and being numbred among the Saints or Christians; 1 *Cor.* 10. And truly they seem to be much more in danger of being betrayed into

ſuch a ſelf-flattery, who are not admitted to Church-Fellowſhip upon their Chriſtian profeſſion, unleſs beſides that they can give ſuch a ſatisfactory account to the Church of their converſion after they have been firſt received into the Church Catholick by Baptiſm, in which there may be great miſtake in them that ſo receive them. And therefore the *New-England* Miniſters in their Anſwer to Mr. *Davenport*'s Apologetical Preface, *p.* 43, 44. ſay thus: *Indeed when Men confound theſe two, and do tye viſible Church-Membership unto ſuch Conditions and qualifications, as are reputed enough to Salvation: this may tend to harden Men, and to make them conceit, that if once they be got into the Church, they are ſure of Heaven; whenas alas it may be they are far from it.*

But in all this there is nothing againſt the great uſefulneſs and deſirableneſs of Diſcipline in the Church, for the Cure or Excommunication of the notoriouſly ſcandalous. But yet a neglect of this in them to whom it belongs, is no ſufficient ground of ſeparation from that Church where it is ſo neglected. For though Diſcipline be neceſſary for the better being of the Church, yet it is not of the Eſſence of the Church: it doth not ceaſe

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to be a true Church for want of it. And the neglect of it in a Church is so far from being a reason why the better part in such a Church should separate from the worse, as that it is indeed a reason against it why they should not: Because where publick Discipline is wanting, there is the more need of private application to delinquent Members, which separation takes Men off from, or at best puts them under a great disadvantage of doing that good among them thereby, which otherwise they might. Such a separation rather puts those separated from, under a temptation of Making a party against them, as is frequently seen: and the division made and heightened thus on both sides, tends more to weaken the Christian Interest in the main, than all the exercise of Discipline in separate Congregations, tends to promote it. It's true, if Christians were to mind only the pleasing of themselves, it would be a pleasant thing for the good indeed to converse and hold Communion with such only as themselves. But it will turn to a better account at last, if by denying their inclination in this they help and bring on a worser sort, and *gain their Master ten Talents.* There should *be more abundant honour given to that part*

which lacketh, that there may be no Schiſm in the Body, 1 Cor. 12. 24. Our Saviour himſelf was chiefly for the bringing home of ſtraying *Sheep*, and as a Phyſician to be among the ſick rather than the whole: Not becauſe he loved them better; but becauſe they had more need, and becauſe he could thereby be more ſerviceable as to the main end of his coming into the World. *He came not to call the Righteous, but ſinners to Repentance; to miniſter, and not to be miniſtred to.* And to be this way employed, ſeems to be more acceptable to God, than to have to do only with the Righteous: *There is joy in Heaven over one ſinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine juſt Perſons which need no Repentance.* And thus much I think may ſuffice to ſhew how unlikely, yea, how impoſſible it is to prove that the mixture of the bad with the good in the Pariſhes, makes Communion with them unlawful.

3. They cannot prove the conſtitution of Parochial Congregations to be bad upon account of that diſtribution by which the whole Nation is divided into parts, into ſo many Pariſhes, which they are wont to call humane inſtitution. For, firſt, they are of the ſame inſtitution in

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the main, as those were which were planted by the Apostles themselves. For from what were those called Churches, but from the Christians usual Assembling together for Communion in Gospel Ordinances? The Greek word Translated *Church* properly signifying an *Assembly*. And if the Parishioners in a Parish, do usually Assemble together upon the same account, are not those Gospel-Churches as well as the other? and of the same institution?

Secondly, For the Christians that live within the same Precincts or Parish-bounds to Assemble together for Communion in Gospel-Ordinances, and so to be of the same particular Church, and not of another, is a thing which best answers the ends of particular Church-ship, and the primitive pattern. For vicinity of Neighbour-hood and cohabitation, (which generally are not to be had so well in any other way as in that of Parochial distribution) do best accommodate those in Church-Relation, with the knowledge of each others Condition and Conversation, and with opportunity and advantage to watch over, confer with, and to admonish, exhort, and comfort one another, and to Assemble together for publick

Worſhip; which are the ends of particular Church-aſſociation. And accordingly the Primitive Chriſtians which lived together within the ſame civil bounds of Cities and Towns, as of *Corinth*, *Cenchrea*, *&c.* were conſtantly of the ſame Church, and as ſuch were ſtill denominated by the places where they did reſide. And if ſome ſuch diſtribution of the Chriſtians in a Nation into ſeveral particular Worſhipping Congregations as is now made by humane Authority, is neceſſary of it ſelf in reference to the Church-Aſſociation, though no humane Authority had required it, then certainly the command of humane Authority that it ſhould be ſo, cannot make it unneceſſary, much leſs unlawful.

4. They cannot prove the Worſhip now uſed in our Parochial Aſſemblies, to be ſuch as may not lawfully be joined in. The Lawfulneſs of Communion in the Worſhip of the *Engliſh* Liturgy, is the thing in queſtion. And if they cannot prove Communion in it unlawful, neither, 1. Becauſe it is a ſet Form: nor, 2. Becauſe it is ſuch a ſet Form as it is; nor, 3. Becauſe it is impoſed; then I ſhall take it for granted they cannot prove it unlawful any other way. And whether

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ever they are like to prove Communion in that Worſhip unlawful upon any of thoſe accounts, conſider what I have to offer, and then judge.

1. They cannot prove Communion in that Worſhip unlawful upon account of its being a ſet Form; becauſe they cannot prove all ſet Forms of Worſhip forbidden. We have Prayer ſeveral times commanded in Scripture, but no where determined that it ſhall be extemporary that ever I could learn. And therefore if the want of an expreſs precept for praying in a ſet Form made praying in a ſet Form unlawful, the ſame thing would make extemporary Prayer unlawful too. When God hath in Scripture plainly determined to whom we ſhall pray, and in whoſe Name, and for what, and in what manner, but not in what external mode, as whether in a ſet Form or without; either of them may be Lawful. For the reaſon, doubtleſs, why God hath not reſtrained Prayer either to the one mode or the other, is, that either may be made uſe of as occaſion ſerves, or circumſtances require. For if he had not intended to have left Men at more Liberty in this than he hath in the object, matter, and manner of Prayer, he would have been as par-

particular in determining in what mode he would be ſought to, as in what Name, and for what. It is in this duty of Prayer in reference to the mode, much as it is in the duty of ſinging of Pſalms: the duty of ſinging them is expreſly enjoined in the New Teſtament as well as the Old, but what Pſalms in particular, and whether ſuch as are indited by them that ſing, or by ſome others for them, or whether in Proſe or in Meeter, or whether by all the Congregation jointly, or by a part only, are circumſtances not determined particularly in the New Teſtament. And why are they not? But that there might be a Liberty left to vary in theſe particulars as circumſtances ſhould render it moſt convenient. Some indeed have made ſuch ill uſe of this, as that becauſe the Scripture hath not determined all theſe particulars, they will not make uſe of any, and ſo wholly neglect the duty it ſelf, to the diſhonour of him who hath made it a duty: as if he had been defective in not determining thoſe circumſtances, when as Men were purpoſely left at Liberty herein for their greater edification. And doubtleſs for the ſame reaſon is the external mode of Prayer left ſo much undetermined as it is.

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By these things we may see how impertinently some use to object against the Liturgical mode of Worship, the sin of *Nadab* and *Abihu*, in offering strange fire before the Lord, and of *Jeroboam*'s keeping the Passover on the fifteenth day of the eighth Month, and the like. For if the offering of Incense had been commanded, but with what fire not determined, it would not have been their sin to have offered with any fire that had been conveniently useful for that purpose. And so if the keeping of the Passover had been commanded, and neither time nor place determined, it would have been no sin to have kept it on the fifteenth day of the eighth Month, and in *Bethel*, provided it had been to the Lord only. So we say when Prayer is commanded, but the mode not determined, any are lawful as Circumstances shall render them convenient. God had appointed with what fire Incense should be offered as well as that Incense it self should be offered, *viz.* with fire from off the Altar: And so he had in what Month, and on what day of the Month the Passover should be kept, as well as that it should be kept at all: and in varying from these was the sin of those Men. If God had limited

Prayer

Prayer by his command to that mode which we call extemporary praying, then theſe inſtances would have been pertinently alledged againſt the Liturgy, but this is not the caſe; and therefore they, and all other of like Nature are impertinently alledged againſt modes of Worſhip not determined in Scripture either one way or other. And ſuch is the allegation of thoſe Scriptures alſo in this caſe, which are againſt adding to the Word, *Deut.* 12. 32. againſt Sacrificing to Idol-gods, which God ſaith he commanded not, *Jer.* 7. 31. and 19. 5. *Deut.* 17. 3. againſt making falſe repreſentations of God by Images, as in the ſecond Commandment, which becauſe they do ſo, are therefore called a lie: all which refer to falſe Worſhip in the ſubſtance of it, as being contrary to God's expreſs Command, and not unto ſuch circumſtances relating to the ſubſtance of Commanded Worſhip, which are neither Commanded nor forbidden, but left to the prudence of God's People to order themſelves in by general Rules: for which cauſe the allegation of them in this buſineſs, is wholly impertinent and irrelative to the queſtion. And yet this way of miſapplying Scripture, hath been, I think I

may

may say, the only way of upholding unlawful separations in the Church.

But the plain truth is, if that would satisfie Men, that the Scripture is so far from forbidding the use of a set Form in Prayer in any case, as that there is much in the Scripture to countenance it. God Commanded a Form to be used by the Priests in Blessing the People, *Numb.* 6. 23. —— Hezekiah *the King, and the Princes commanded the Levites to sing praise unto the Lord with the words of* David *and* Asaph *the Seer*, 2 Chron. 29. 30. What are many of the Psalms but so many set Forms of Prayer and Thanksgiving? The Title of the 102 Psalm, is *A Prayer for the afflicted when he is overwhelmed and poureth out his complaint before the Lord.* The 72 Psalm concludes thus, *The Prayers of* David, *the Son of* Jesse, *are ended.* The Title of the 90 Psalm is a Prayer of *Moses* the man of God. Our Saviour taught his Disciples a Form of Prayer, as *John* the *Baptist* had before taught his; and commanded them saying, *when ye Pray, say our Father*, &c. And is it not strange then that any of his Disciples should say when ye pray, say not our Father, *&c.*

Again, do not they who sing Psalms pray

pray to God, and praiſe God in a ſet Form? Nay, is not the Prayer of every Miniſter a Form to all the People that join with him, how extemporary ſoever it may be to himſelf? For they are as much confined in this caſe, as if he read it out of a Book: and every time he varies, it is ſtill but a new Form to the People. So that they that are moſt againſt Forms, are neceſſitated to uſe ſome themſelves. And ſo I have done with ſhewing my reaſon why the Prayers of the Liturgy cannot be proved unlawful in reſpect of its being a ſet Form.

2. They cannot prove it unlawful to join in the Prayers made according to the Liturgy upon account of its being ſuch a ſet Form as it is; Neither, 1. In reſpect of the object to whom, nor of the Mediator by whom the Prayer is made. Nor, 2. In reſpect of the matter of it of which it doth conſiſt. Nor, 3. In reſpect of the words and phraſe ſignificant of the matter. Nor, 4. In reſpect of the method, the repetitions, the abruptions, the reſponſes, or popular conclamations thereby uſed, nor becauſe read out of a Book. Nor, 5. Though they ſhould be able to prove the fore-mentioned repetitions, abruptions, reſponſes, and

and conclamations, or the like, to be real defects in that mode of Worship, and that a better is desirable, and that another might be more useful.

1. They cannot prove Communion in those Prayers unlawful in respect of him to whom they are made, nor in respect of him in whose Name they are made. For they are made to the true God only, and only in the Name and Mediation of the only Mediator Christ Jesus.

2. Nor secondly, In respect of the matter of which they do consist. I know no Prayer in the Liturgy appointed for the ordinary publick Worship, but what refers either to confession of sin, or Petition for pardon, or for the assistance of God's grace and Holy Spirit, or for some temporal or other spiritual or eternal Blessings, or for the averting of the contrary evils, or to thanksgiving to God for benefits relating to this Life, or that which is to come; and all this in the behalf of our selves and others. And if there be nothing but what is of this Nature, the matter of the Prayers to be sure, cannot be proved to be unlawful.

3. They cannot prove Communion in those Prayers unlawful upon account of the

the words and phraſe by which the ſubſtantial matter of the Worſhip is expreſſed. They are not made in an unknown tongue or Language not underſtood by the people. Nor will they ever be able to prove but that in reſpect of the words and phraſe, that mode of Prayer is of the common Nature of any right mode of Prayer whatſoever. The beſt mode of publick Prayer is but a *medium* of conveying the ſubſtantial matter of Prayer to the underſtanding and affection of them that pray, and from thence to God. It is neceſſary indeed in this reſpect that the words and phraſe ſhould be ſignificant and expreſſive of the import of the matter and ſubſtance of which the Prayer doth conſiſt. As when God is to be magnified for the glory of his perfections and marvellous doings: and when we would be humbled for the pravity and degenerateneſs of our Nature and miſcarriages towards him; and when in the ſenſe thereof, and of God's declared goodneſs through Chriſt, we would beg forgiveneſs of ſin and the aſſiſtance of his grace for amendment, and eternal Life in the Iſſue, or any temporal Bleſſing; it is neceſſary that theſe things be expreſſed in words and phraſes that have ſome aptneſs in them

them to fill the Soul with apprehensions and affections suitable to the respective matter of the parts of Prayer to which they do relate. The general Nature of all right modes of Prayer consists in this, whether with, or without the use of a Book, whether uttered in a set Form of words, or from the present invention and conception of the mind. And it cannot with any colour of reason or truth be denied, but that the Liturgical mode of Prayer is of this Nature. The words and phrase are intelligibly significant of the matter and substance of Prayer to which they relate; and so serve for publick edification, according to the Rule, 1 *Cor.* 14. 9, 14, 15.

And if so, then we may, if the fault be not in our selves, and if a heart be not wanting, seriously and deyoutly present our necessary Confessions, Petitions, and Thanksgivings unto God in that mode. It is too gross an apprehension of God to think that a greater variety of words and phrases as such, do delight him: but it is Humility, Reverence, sense of wants, fervent desires of supply, and Faith of acceptance through Christ concurring with words significant of such things, whether pronounced out of a Book, or otherwise,

that he is pleaſed with. Nor is it comely for us to think that it is the repetition of the ſame words every day, as in the Lord's Prayer, that doth diſpleaſe the Lord: but it is the irreverent, raſh, careleſs, and cuſtomary pouring out words before him without any due ſenſe of what they import, that doth offend him. If Men be but attentive and careful to engage their hearts to go along with the matter ſignified by the words, and to be duly affected with the import thereof; it is not their being read out of a Book that will make theſe Prayers unacceptable or ineffectual: As on the other hand, if Men are careleſs and unconſcionable therein, it is not its proceeding from a gift of him that utters the Prayer that will make it acceptable and effectual, how excellent ſoever the matter and words may be. I conclude then that the mode of Prayer in our *Engliſh* Liturgy, doth in the general Nature and quality of it, agree with all right modes of publick Prayer whatſoever, and with the general Rule by which all right modes of Prayer are to be ſquared. The queſtion is not whether it be the beſt, but whether it is ſo competently uſeful, as to render Communion in Prayer by it lawful.

4. They cannot prove Communion in the Prayers of the Liturgy unlawful in reſpect of the method, repetitions, abruptions, reſponſes, or conclamations thereby uſed. For ſo long as the Scriptures in which the duty of Prayer is enjoined, have not determined whether it ſhall be with the help of a Book, or without: or whether longer or ſhorter: or whether all the publick Prayer meet for the Aſſembly ſhall be put up to God in two or three Prayers, or more: or whether all ſhall be pronounced by the Miniſter only, or part by the People alſo: or whether kneeling or ſtanding; I cannot ſee how it will be proved unlawful to do it any of theſe ways, as circumſtances in the caſe may be. For the queſtion before us is not at all which is moſt convenient where Men are at Liberty to chuſe, but only what is Lawful, or which is to be choſen under a neceſſity of either uſing ſuch a mode, or of ſeparating. It is not unlawful for all the People in a Congregation to pray to God, or praiſe him together with one voice, in ſinging of Pſalms: and how then it will be proved unlawful for them to do it in another way of praying, I know not. We read of many that by their conjunction of

voices, *were as one to make one ſound to be heard in praiſing and thanking the Lord*, 2 Chron. 5. 13. They may, perhaps, think ſuch repetitions of the ſame Prayer as are uſed by the Liturgy may be forbidden by our Saviour, when he ſaid, when ye Pray uſe not vain repetitions as the Heathen do, *Mat.* 6. But they will hardly prove it, if they do but conſider what the vain repetitions which the Heathen uſed, were. For there ſeems to be no likeneſs or proportion between the repetitions in the Liturgy and thoſe of the Heathen. For they repeated the very ſame words it may be a hundred times over and more in a little time: as they, in 1 *Kings* 18. 26. who *from Morning until Noon, cryed, O* Baal, *hear us*; *O* Baal, *hear us*. The very ſame words are uſed twenty ſix times in *Pſal.* 136. and often in many other Pſalms, and yet I dare not ſay they are a vain repetition, and I ſuppoſe, nor they neither. * It is ſaid of our Saviour, that *again he went away and prayed, and ſpake the ſame words*, Mark 14. 39.

* *If accompanied with ſuitable affection without expectation of acceptance merly for much ſpeaking, which makes repetition vain.*

5. Although they ſhould be able certainly, and without all doubt to prove the fore-mentioned

mentioned repetitions, abruptions, responses, and conclamations, or the like, to be real defects in that mode of worship, and that a better *medium* is desirable, and that another might be more useful; yet it will not from thence follow, that that would be a sufficient ground or cause of separation from the substance of the worship it self, for these two reasons.

1. Because those who count the use of these a disorderly way of praying, need not be active in those things unless they will, but only passive. And if they be but passive, they will not by their presence be guilty of the disorder. I suppose they do not think their presence at conceived Prayers by habit, makes them guilty of all the disorders and defects that are found in them, or some of them, so long as they do not in their minds consent to those disorders and defects, but are sorry for them. For they are in such cases but involuntary defects as to them: and defects of that Nature our best performances are more or less liable to. We may lay aside all duties at this rate, if we think we may not endeavour a performance of them till we can do them without all involuntary defects. But that in which a mans will is not, is not morally the mans act: *Every Man is tempted when he*

is drawn away of his own luſt, and enticed. *Jam.* 1. And no Man is to be counted a conſenter to all that is done in his preſence, though he do not declare his diſſent, unleſs he declare his conſent to it ſome other way than meerly by his preſence. If this were not ſo, a Man would be guilty of all the defects he perceives in the Miniſters Praying and Preaching, unleſs he declared his diſſent from them in the open Congregation, which if practiſed, would tend to open confuſion. When we conſider the corrupt Eſtate of the Jewiſh Church in which our Saviour held Communion both in Temple-Worſhip, and Synagogue-Worſhip at *Nazareth*, where he was brought up; I ſuppoſe no Man will think that the Adminiſtration of the Worſhip there, was free from all defects, eſpecially conſidering that their Liturgy was of humane compoſure, and yet our Saviour's preſence at this Worſhip, and joining in it, did not make him guilty of the defects that cleaved to it. The Scribes and Phariſees taught unſound Doctrine as well as ſound; and yet our Saviour encouraged his Diſciples to hear them, only cautioning them to beware of the leaven of their Doctrine, leſt they ſhould receive it, or

approve

approve of it: Which had been a contradiction, if their presence in reference to the good, had been an approbation of the bad. Nor did the private Members of the Church of *Corinth* by their presence at the disorderly Administration of Holy things, complained of by the Apostle, in the 11. and 14. Chap. make themselves guilty of that disorder, without somewhat else besides their presence. That's my first Reason.

2. The repetitions, abruptions, responses, and the reading the Prayers out of a Book, are not opposite to, or destructive of the matter and ends of Prayer: all that can be pretended, is, that they are less useful, less conducing to the ends of Worship. The things asked in that way are desirable in themselves; the supposed defect lies in the supposed disorderly way of asking them. For otherwise the petitioning for things in this way, tends to the same end as when the same things are prayed for in a supposed more orderly way, though comparatively with some disadvantage. A greater degree of usefulness doth not exclude a less, but only exceed it. A mode or *medium* of Prayer is not therefore useless because another is more useful, especially when a

more uſeful one cannot be made uſe of, and the other declined without a greater inconvenience otherwiſe. They will not ſay it's unlawful to join in conceived Prayer with a Miniſter or private Chriſtian that is leſs able than another, and, perhaps, far inferiour to ſome then preſent. A leſs uſeful verſion of the Pſalms doth not make it unlawful to ſing Pſalms by ſuch a verſion. The geſture of kneeling in Prayer is the beſt and meeteſt, and yet that doth not make the uſe of another geſture in Prayer unlawful. If the Common-Prayer Book, *medium* of Worſhip, then be in the ſore mentioned reſpects, or any other, leſs uſeful than another, it might be indeed a reaſon inducing them that think ſo, to make uſe of another which they judge better, if they were at Liberty to do it without drawing on a greater inconvenience, ſuch as ſeparation is with all its ill effects. But otherwiſe can any Man think the leſs uſefulneſs of a mode but of part of the publick Worſhip (for it is no more) to be a ſufficient ground of ſeparation, when there is a neceſſity of uſing the one, or practiſing the other. Under ſuch Circumſtances doubtleſs a leſs uſeful mode of publick Worſhip is much more eligible than to run all the hazards, and

and to bring on all the evil effects of a ſeparation for the uſe of one but comparatively better. It is moſt certain that ſeparation upon account of a leſs uſeful mode tends more to the hurt and dammage of the Religious intereſt in the main, than the uſe of a leſs uſeful mode of but part of the publick Worſhip can with any colour of reaſon or truth be pretended to do. All that can be pretended, is, that it tends leſs to the good of Religion, but not at all to its hurt, as ſeparation doth.

3. And laſtly, as to this: They cannot prove Communion in the Worſhip preſcribed by the Liturgy to be unlawful upon account of its being impoſed by Man, and commanded by humane Authority. Before they can prove this, they muſt prove ſuch Communion to be forbidden of God (which, as I have been ſhewing before, cannot be done.) For that Law of God which will bear us out in doing a thing, cannot be repealed by the Law of Man commanding the ſame thing. There is no ſuch enmity or inconſiſtency between God's Laws and thoſe of Men which are but ſubordinate, or not oppoſite to God's, as that any thing ſhould become the leſs acceptable to God, meerly becauſe commanded by his

his Miniſter. Nay, we obey God in obeying the higher powers in ſuch things as are not contrary to his Laws; becauſe God hath commanded us to obey them in ſuch things. It is not a ſetting up of Man in God's ſtead till Man is obeyed againſt God, not when he is obeyed in ſubordination to him.

But let us turn the Tables a little, and ſuppoſe that the Law of the Land did forbid the uſe of any ſet Form of Prayer in the Church, (as ſometime the uſe of the Liturgy was forbidden) and that all Miniſters were by Law commanded to pray extempore, would ſuch an impoſition or command make extemporary Prayer unlawful, and only a Form of Prayer then neceſſary? I ſuppoſe they will not ſay it would; and if not, then for the ſame reaſon why it would not make Prayer in that mode unlawful, it doth not make it unlawful in this.

Men uſe to plead their Chriſtian Liberty againſt ſuch humane impoſitions. But the beſt uſe of Chriſtian Liberty, is ſtill to do thoſe things, which all things conſidered, tend moſt to common good, the edification of our ſelves and others, though otherwiſe and out of thoſe circumſtances we were under no obligation

to

to do them. And thus did St. *Paul* make use of it, who best understood the use of his Christian Liberty. *Though I am free from all Men*, saith he, *yet have I made my self a Servant unto all, that I might gain the more:* To the Jews I became as a Jew; to them that are without Law, as without Law, and all this *for the Gospel sake*, 1 Cor. 9. 19. 23. The interest of the Gospel in the main did govern him (as it should do us) in the use of his Christian Liberty, sometimes one way, and sometimes another. And therefore we have him sometimes against Circumcision, that the truth of the Gospel might be preserved among the Christians, *Gal.* 2. 5. and 5. 1. And sometimes making use of it for the furtherance of the Gospel, *Acts* 16. 3. And he perswaded the Christians to use their Liberty to which they were called, not so much to please themselves as *to serve one another in Love*; but by no means *to use it as an occasion to the flesh*, as some would have taught them, in casting off the Rule and Government of Heathen Governours, Masters, and Magistrates, under a pretence of being Christ's Freemen, *Gal.* 5. 13. 1 *Tim.* 6. 1, 2, 3. 2 *Pet.* 2. 10. *Jude* 9. Now I have been shewing before, that

a Liberty of a total diſuſe of the Liturgie in the publick Worſhip as the caſe now ſtands, cannot be practicable with that advantage to the general intereſt of Religion, as the uſe of it may, as any Men of reaſon may eaſily diſcern, if they be not blinded with prejudice and intereſt. An Argument may much rather be fetched from Chriſtian Liberty for the uſe of the Liturgy under the preſent poſture of Circumſtances, than againſt it. For if God hath not limited Prayer to one mode only, then Chriſtians are at Liberty to uſe any as occaſion ſhall require for the intereſt of Religion in the Main; and, conſequently, that which for the preſent the Law requires.

I have now near done with the ſecond Dividing-Principle: and when the whole I have ſaid about it hath been conſidered, I appeal to all who are able to make a judgment in the caſe, whether thoſe that ſeparate from our Proteſtant Pariſh-Congregations, will ever be able to clear themſelves from the guilt of ſinful Schiſm, and cauſleſs ſeparation, and of all the miſchievous effects that have, and may proceed from it, or be occaſioned by it.

And to give yet the greater weight to the

the general scope of what I have said about the Lawfulness of Communion in our Parish Congregations, and of the sinfulness of separating from them, notwithstanding all pretences, I shall set before you the un-erring example of our Blessed Saviour in his holding local Communion when he was on Earth, with such a Church as he did: which, for ought I can judge, was more corrupt both in respect of Persons and things, than any of our Parish-Churches are, though many of them, alas, are too bad indeed. 1. The High Priest-hood, the highest Office in the Church, in which Ministry all the Worshippers were concerned, was bought and sold for Money, or otherwise unduly obtained, and frequently translated from one to another, contrary to God's appointment, of which we have an account from *Josephus*, besides what we have in *Luke* 3. 2. *John* 11. 49, 51. and 18. 13. 2. Provisions for the Temple-Service, were in part unduly obtained in the Corban way, *Mar.* 7. 11. 3. The Holy Temple was profaned, being made a House of Merchandize and a Den of Thieves, which was otherwise Holy by institution as well as the matter of the Worship is self. 4. The Law was cor-

corrupted by many falſe gloſſes, *Mat.* 5. 5. The Commandments of Men were taught for Doctrines, *Mat.* 15. 9. 6. The Church cenſures were abuſed to the Excommunication of the beſt Men, *John* 9. 22. 34. 7. The Sadducees, who denied the Reſurrection, or that there is Angel or Spirit, were not only tolerated, but were alſo a great and prevailing party in that Church. 8. The Scribes, Phariſees, Chief Prieſts, and Rulers, were perſecuting and oppreſſive, proud, covetous, and hypocritical: and the common People generally ſo bad, as that they preferred *Barabbas* before Jeſus, and had their hands in ſhedding the Blood of our Saviour: and they with the other were all of them together *a Generation of Vipers, a ſinful and an adulterous Generation.* In this lamentable condition was that Church then. Yet all this notwithſtanding, our Saviour did not refrain the publick Worſhip, but held Communion with this Church, both in Temple and Synagogue-Worſhip, as you may ſee in *Luke* 2. 41, 42, 43. *John* 2. 23. and 7. 10. and 10. 22, 23. *Luke* 4. 16. *Mat.* 26. 17, 18. There is no Man ever had ſo good a mind as he, to ſoundneſs of Doctrine, purity of Worſhip and Worſhippers,

ſhippers, and to right order and Diſcipline in the Church. And his Wiſdom was ſuch, as that he knew perfectly what was fitteſt to be done under ſuch Circumſtances of things, both in reference to his Father's Glory, the furtherance of Religion, the advancement of Reformation, and the Salvation of Men, for which he came into the World; and what courſe would beſt conduce to theſe ends, and what would not. And although as a publick Perſon he did not ſpare to reprove the corruptions of the time both in reſpect of Perſons and things, and to endeavour a Reformation in a regular way, yet he never attempted it by breaking off Communion with that Church in the publick Worſhip, and by erecting ſeparate Communities for Reformation ſake; which yet certainly he would have done, if that had been the better and nearer way to thoſe great ends but now mentioned.

And if Men had no other ends or deſigns than our Saviour had, me-thinks thoſe that are to learn of him, and not to teach him, ſhould not lay aſide thoſe means and methods which he made choice of to accompliſh his ends, or ever think to make a better choice than he had done.

If

If when thoſe who are ingenuous and truly conſcientious, have well conſidered theſe things, and yet after that ſhall continue ſeparatiſts from our Pariſh-Churches, I ſhall ſomewhat wonder how or which way they can ſatisfie themſelves in ſo doing. Me thinks this unqueſtionable and uncontroulable pattern and example of our Saviour, of whom we are all to learn, and who hath left us an example that we ſhould tread in his ſteps, ſhould of it ſelf alone if there were nothing elſe to be ſaid in the caſe, put an end to all diſputes about this buſineſs, and ſatisfie the moſt ſcrupulous Chriſtian under Heaven.

The Jews initiating of Proſelytes by Baptiſm as well as by Circumciſion, was a humane addition to what God had appointed: and yet for all that our Saviour made choice of Baptiſm by which to initiate Proſelytes into his Religion. He uſed a geſture in eating the Paſsover, different from what was appointed at the firſt inſtitution, as *Ainſworth* obſerves on *Exod.* 12. 6. 11. Which things I might improve to ſeveral purpoſes: but becauſe they are not ſo directly appoſite to what I have laſt diſcourſed, I ſhall leave them to be pondered on by ſuch as are

ſcrupulous

scrupulous over much, and who think no alteration of Circumstances between the first and after use of an institution, will justifie a Circumstantial variation from what was first practised thereabout.

III. *Dividing Principle to be avoided.*

Another Dividing Principle, is, That it doth not belong to the Higher Powers in a Nation professing Christianity, to intermeddle in any publick establishment of that Religion, farther than to protect, countenance, and encourage the Professors of it in their Profession. I call this a Dividing Principle, because the Higher Powers doing more than so in having Divided the whole Nation into particular Parish-Churches, and having appointed Gospel-Ordinances to be Administred in those Congregations, and obliging, and constraining all professing the true Christian Religion in the Nation to attend the Worship of God in those Assemblies; this being the National way as they call it, some do therefore separate from it. In opposition to this Dividing Principle, I shall endeavour to shew,

1. That Nations professing the true

Chriſtian Religion, do upon that account according to the Scripture, ſtand related to God as his People in a large ſence, and in contradiſtinction to the Heathen and Infidel World.

2. That a National ſettlement of the Chriſtian Worſhip in the Pariſh Churches by the Higher Powers, is more for the intereſt of Religion and Men's Salvation, than if there ſhould be none.

1. To begin with the firſt of theſe. When God by *Abraham* deſigned to ſet on foot a method of Reforming the World, he declared to him he would do it in a National way: *As for me, my Covenant is with thee, a Father of many Nations ſhalt thou be: A Father of many Nations have I made thee*, ſaith the Lord, *Gen.* 17. 4, 5. Meaning, I ſuppoſe, that that Reformation which was begun in him, by his Faith and Obedience in forſaking the Idols of his Country upon God's call, and betaking himſelf to the Worſhip and Service of the true God, ſhould by degrees extend to the taking in of many Nations. God at the very firſt told him that *he ſhould be a Bleſſing*, and that in him, and in his Seed, all Nations ſhould be Bleſſed, *Gen.* 12. 2, 3. And by St. *Paul*, *Rom.* 4. 16, 17. we underſtand

ſtand that God's promiſe of making *Abraham* a Father of many Nations, was not in reſpect of many Nations deſcending from him in the way of Natural Generation, but by deriving from him that profeſſion of Faith and holy Worſhip, which was tranſmitted down from him, not only to the Nation of the Jews, but alſo to the Nations of the Gentiles. To begin this Work in a National way, the Lord promiſed *Abraham* to give to his Seed, his Natural Seed, the Land of *Canaan* as the place where this work ſhould be eminently begun in a National way. And all that Nation were accordingly brought into Covenant with God, and became his Church and People. And all the Proſelytes of the Gentiles that forſook their Idols to join with them to Worſhip the God of *Abraham*, and were Circumciſed, were without any exception ſave that of legal uncleanneſs, to eat the Paſsover, *Numb.* 9. And thus it held on in the way of gathering only ſome here and there out of the Nations of the Gentiles, until Chriſt gave Commiſſion to Preach the Goſpel to all Nations, Baptizing them.

And as the time of bringing in whole Nations of the Gentiles in times of the

Goſpel drew nearer, ſo Predictions of it by the Prophets, were more particular and expreſs, *Iſa.* 52. 15. *He ſhall ſprinkle many Nations:* to wit, as he promiſed in particular to the Jews to ſprinkle clean water upon them, to *cleanſe* them *from all their filthineſs, and from all their Idols,* Ezek. 36. 25. And again, *Iſa.* 55. 5. *Behold, thou ſhalt call a Nation that thou knoweſt not, and Nations that knew not thee ſhall run unto thee.* And God's call of a Nation, and a Nations Anſwer to that call, makes a Church, works a Relation between God and them; as ſome have well obſerved. And *Zechariah*, one of the laſt Prophets, ſpeaks yet more expreſly, Chap. 2. 11. *And many Nations ſhall be joined to the Lord in that day, and ſhall be his People.* To be joined to the Lord, and to be his People, plainly ſignifie ſuch a Relation between God and them, as doth make them to be of his Church. *Mat.* 21. 43. *The Kingdom of God ſhall be taken from you, and given to a Nation:* that is, ſure Nationally, for otherwiſe we cannot ſay it was taken from all of that Nation of the Jews, *Rev.* 11. 15. *The Kingdoms of this World are become the Kingdoms of the Lord, and of his Chriſt.*

Theſe

These Predictions have been fulfilled as Nations have Nationally imbraced and professed the Christian Religion. For it is a vain thing to think that these Prophecies have not yet at all been fulfilled now after the Gospel hath been running its course these sixteen hundred years to accomplish them. And if any have a mind to interpret these Prophecies of National Churches by that in *Revel.* 5. 9. *And hast Redeemed us to God by thy Blood, out of every Kindred, and Tongue, and People and Nation:* They may do well to consider, that the calling of a few out of Nations (according to their Notion) is not the calling of those Nations themselves. It's one thing for Men to be brought to effectual Faith and sincere Obedience by the Gospel, and another to be brought to a general profession of it. There are the many that are called, and yet but few that are the chosen, *Mat.* 20. 16. and 22. 14. It is in the one sense that they are said to be Redeemed out of every Kindred, Tongue, People, and Nation; and in the other, that whole Nations are said to be joined to the Lord, and to be his People; for so they are by a general call and profession. Every individual Person in a Nation that so professeth and

Worſhippeth the true God in oppoſition to all falſe gods as to be called by his Name, are in Scripture denominated Sons and Daughters to God in a large ſenſe, *Iſa.* 43. 6, 7. *Bring my Sons from far, and my daughters from the ends of the Earth, even every one that is called by my Name.* As the Worſhippers of Idols are called the Children of a ſtrange god, *Mal.* 2. 11. So in oppoſition to that, and in a large ſenſe, all that Worſhip the true God, are called his Children, as the Jews were, *Deut.* 14. 1. When St. *Paul* ſaid, in *Gal.* 3. 26. to all the Churches of *Galatia*, *Ye are all the Children of God by Faith in Chriſt Jeſus:* it was ſure from their profeſſion of Faith in Chriſt Jeſus in their Baptiſm by which they put him on (as there he ſaith) that he ſo ſtiles them, and not from the effectualneſs of the Faith of every one of them: For he chargeth them with *being removed from the Goſpel of Chriſt to another Goſpel*, Chap. 1. 6. with *not obeying the Truth*, Chap. 3. 1. and tells them that *he was afraid of them leſt he had beſtowed labour on them in vain*, Chap. 4. 11. that *he ſtood in doubt of them*, and was *travelling in Birth again with them for the forming of Chriſt in them*, ver. 19, 20. There are many that are the People of

of God by professed Obligation on their part, that are not so by special interest in the promise on God's part, for want of performing the special Condition. And such are the Servants of God, indeed; but they are called in Scripture *Sloathful Servants, unprofitable Servants, wicked Servants, foolish Virgins, Branches in Christ* the Vine, that bear no Fruit.

2. A National settlement of the Christian Worship in the Parish-Churches by the Higher-Powers, is more for the interest of Religion, and Men's Salvation, than if there should be none. It is for the interest of Religion in a Nation that are of the true Religion by profession, that the Higher Powers there being of the same Religion, do take order, 1. That God be publickly Worshipped by the People in the use of Gospel-Ordinances. 2. That places for publick Worship be provided for that end. 3. That Church-Officers competently qualified, be appointed to administer those Ordinances in those places; and that maintenance be appointed them that they may attend that Work. 4. That all the People of the Christian Profession, be required to attend the publick Worship. 5. That this be enjoined under such moderate penalties,

as may ſecure the Law from contempt, or careleſs neglect. 6. That ſome be appointed to ſee the Law put in Execution: which yet cannot be practicable without a diſtribution of the whole into parts in the ſame, or ſome ſuch way as that is, by which the whole Nation is divided into Pariſhes. 7. That Church-Diſcipline be eſtabliſhed and duly exerciſed for the purging of the Church, and keeping it pure. The firſt of theſe particulars that the Higher Powers take care that God be publickly Worſhipped by the People, is evident of it ſelf. Nature teaches all Men to Worſhip him whom they acknowledge to be their God, and by themſelves or others to teach thoſe under their Government to do the like, as appears by univerſal practice. And the ſecond of the fore mentioned particulars is conſequent upon the firſt, and the third upon the ſecond, and ſo on.

That theſe things are for the intereſt of Religion, every Man's reaſon will eaſily diſcern. For hereby a face of Religion will be kept up in every place in ſuch a Nation, and the means of Salvation will be ready at hand, and all will come under an obligation of Man's Law as well as God's, to make uſe of them. And hereby

through

through the Blessing of God, knowledge and the fear of the Lord will be propagated more than if the People were all left at liberty to do that which is right in their own eyes, to provide, or not provide themselves with such helps, or to use or neglect them as they please. We see by experience that there is generally the least face of Religion in those places that have been most neglected in the publick provision. And it is upon the account of such necessary things as these, that Kings and Queens were promised as a great Blessing to the Church under the Notion of *Nursing Fathers and Nursing Mothers*, to train up, and educate their People in Religion, *Isa.* 49. 23. And the better any Kings and Rulers are, the more careful, and the more zealous will they be to promote and propagate true Religion in their Dominions by their Authority. And usually the success answers the zeal and diligence of such, as we see it did in the good Kings of *Judah* and their People. When *all Kings fall down before him, all Nations shall serve him*, according to the Prophecie, *Psal.* 72. 11. It will be so with the People, when the Kings of Nations subject themselves to Christ, not only in their personal, but more especially in

in their Regal capacity. For which cauſe it ſhould ſeem St. *Paul* exhorted the primitive Chriſtians, *to make Supplications, Prayers, and Interceſſions, for Kings, and all that are in Authority*; as for other reſpects, ſo eſpecially for their Converſion to Chriſtianity (they being then Heathen) both that Chriſtians might live peaceable and quiet Lives in all godlineſs and honeſty, and alſo that Chriſtianity might be propagated in their Dominions, to the Salvation of many the more: For this is implied in the reaſon of the exhortation in theſe words: *For this is good and acceptable in the ſight of God our Saviour, who will have all Men to be ſaved, and come to the knowledge of the Truth*; 1 Tim. 2. 2, 3, 4.

And when the primitive Chriſtians had accordingly for a long time travelled by fervent Prayer for the Converſion of the Heathen Emperours to Chriſtianity, at laſt they obtained their Petition in *Conſtantine*, that famous Chriſtian Emperour: upon whoſe Victories over the Enemies to Chriſtianity, and the propagation of the Chriſtian Religion by publick Authority throughout his Dominions, that joyful acclamation was heard in the Church (as Interpreters underſtand) *Now is come Salvation*

Salvation and ſtrength, and the Kingdom of our God, and the Power of his Chriſt, Revel. 12. 10. Chriſtianity, and ſo the Kingdom of God, was in the Empire before by private mens profeſſion of it: but when it came to be backed by Imperial Edicts and Laws, and to be ſeconded by the power and ſtrength of the Empire; Then, and not till then, was that new Song ſung in the Church: *Now* is come Salvation and Strength, the Kingdom of our God, and the Power of his Chriſt.

I would it were better conſidered by ſome who would be thought great Enemies to Popery, how that in this proper and eminent point of Popery, they ſymbolize with the Pope himſelf, and all that are thorow-Papiſts, *viz.* In denying Kings to have any power in matters Eccleſiaſtical. When the ten Kings, *Revel.* 17. 13. parted with this Eccleſiaſtical Authority to the Pope upon his Uſurpation, they gave their Authority, which God had inveſted them with, as well as their Strength, unto the Beaſt. And as faſt as they fall off from him, they re-aſſume it again, as we ſee all Princes and Governours of the Reformed Religion have done. And of all the Kings that have profeſſed

profeſſed Chriſtianity ever ſince there was a Nation profeſſing it, there hath not, I think, been one, but who have claimed a power about ordering Church-affairs, except ſuch as have given their power and ſtrength unto the Beaſt. And ſhall we not then interpret and underſtand the Ancient Prophecies that went of them, by the event in what we ſee fulfilled?

That Kings may abuſe this power to the propagating a falſe Religion, or in corrupting the true, is no good Argument againſt the due uſe of it in propagating the true. *He is the Miniſter of God to thee for good*, ſaith the Scripture: and as long as he doth that which tends to publick good, he is not out of his way to be ſure, *Rom.* 13. 4. Every Chriſtian is bound to promote the intereſt of Religion according to his capacity: he that is head of a Family as ſuch is bound to do it: and ſo he that is head of a Kingdom, as ſuch is bound to do it likewiſe; every one is under an obligation to do it according to their Talents and ſeveral abilities.

It's true indeed, that ſince all ſuch as are the Higher Powers, *are Miniſters of God for good* to the People, and have no power from God to *do any thing againſt the Truth*,

Truth, but for the Truth; It is greatly to be wished, and fervently to be prayed for in behalf of all Christian Princes and Governours, that God would give them Wisdom, that nothing may be imposed upon their People by them in the Worship of God, but what hath a plain and apt tendency one way or other to further Edification, or to help their Devotion: And that such ways and methods of promoting these ends may be made use of, as are least liable to exception or disputation, thereby to cut off as much as may be, all occasion of Division and pretence of dissatisfaction: that so Peace, Love, and Unity may be recovered, and the happy effects of them obtained.

Yet when all is done that can be done, there will in all National settlements of this Nature, be place for the Exercise of humane prudence. And indeed I know no Sect or party, but though they decry humane prudence about the Worship of God never so much, yet do make use of it themselves in their Administration of Holy things, and are necessitated so to do if they will Worship God publickly at all. The Ordinances of Baptism, Lord's Supper, Word, and Prayer, as touching the matter and substance of them, are par-

particularly and expreſly determined in Scripture: But many particulars about the Adminiſtration of theſe, are left to the guidance and direction of general Rules for Edification. It is not determined in particular what Prayers ſhall be made either before or after the Adminiſtration of Baptiſm or the Lord's Supper, or what exhortation ſhall be made to the People upon the occaſion of them. It is not determined in particular how, or in what way or method the Word and Prayer ſhall be uſed in Church-Aſſemblies; As how much, and what part of the Scripture ſhall be read at one meeting, or how, or what way the Miniſter ſhall improve the Word by Preaching, as whether by what occurs to his preſent thoughts upon occaſion of what is then read, or by uttering what he hath prepared by painful ſtudies otherwiſe; or whether he ſhall do this with, or without the help of Notes. Nor is it particularly determined whether all, or part, or none of the publick Prayers ſhall be in a preſcribed Form, except the Lord's Prayer, or whether any of it ſhall, or ſhall not be read out of a Book, or whether Prayer ſhall be made both before and after Sermon.

Now, in this caſe thoſe to whom it belongs

belongs to take order for the setling of God's publick Worship in a Nation, with the best advice they can take, will necessarily be put upon considering whether it is best to leave all these things wholly to each Minister's Liberty and choice, or wholly to limit them, or whether to leave them partly at Liberty, as in the Pulpit, and partly to limit them. And while they deliberate on these things, several circumstances will come under consideration; As the different abilities, and various tempers of the Ministers, and the various capacities and tempers of the People; as whether that which may be best for some, may be best for all, or whether somewhat of a middle Nature may not best accommodate all: and what hath anciently been practised in the Church of God, and what is practised in other Reformed Churches; and which way is most likely to preserve Truth and Peace in the Church, and the like. And when Men have only general Rules to guide and govern themselves by in determining such things as these, it must be remembred that it is a thing incident to the holiest and wisest Men to differ in their application of particular cases to general Rules, when a great variety of Cir-

Circumſtances are to be taken in to make a right judgment in the caſe: their different meaſures of light, if not of Intereſts too, expoſing them thereunto. Their late differences under a greater Liberty in this kind than can now be expected, is a ſufficient proof of this.

And when things of this Nature are done, and determined upon the beſt terms, as is thought by them into whoſe hands the Providence of God hath caſt it, though it ſhould be otherwiſe, not only in the thoughts of many others, but alſo really in it ſelf; yet if nothing be thereby impoſed as a Condition of Communion, but what Circumſtances conſidered, is lawful, the reaſons formerly given may, I conceive, well ſway with all ſober and peaceable minded Chriſtians, rather to make the beſt uſe they can of the preſent ſettlement, than to chuſe to ſeparate, becauſe it is not in all things to their mind. For if there ſhould not be a bearing with one another in ſuch leſſer differences for general Edification ſake, and the intereſt of Religion in the main, and for the maintenance of Peace and Love, till by diſcreet, ſober, and peaceable means thoſe that differ can work themſelves, or thoſe that differ from them, into a nearer agree-

agreement; how should it ever be expected that Christians should maintain such fellowship upon their agreement in the substantials of Christianity notwithstanding circumstantial differences, as for which the Scripture is far more express, than it is for such particular modes of Worship, as those are about which they differ? If differences in judgment about Circumstances whereby the substance of Religion is not in danger, should be a sufficient ground of separation, it's probable there would be almost as many separations as Churches in the World.

Having now done with what I had to say to take Men off from those Dividing Principles which are chiefly considerable, I shall pursue my Directions for endeavouring to keep the Unity of the Spirit in the bond of Peace, no further, considering what plentiful provision there is already made for Direction in the *Cure of Church divisions*, as by others, so especially by that laborious Servant of the Lord, Mr. *Baxter*. I shall therefore conclude this Discourse with a few motives to perswade the several parties which are Divided, to Unite again, and to endeavour to keep the Unity of the Spirit in the bond of Peace: And that all on all

hands would manifeſt themſelves to be ſuch hearty lovers of Peace, Unity, and Charity, as for the ſake thereof thoſe that are uppermoſt, would count it no diſhonour, but rather their glory, to condeſcend to thoſe that are below: and that thoſe again, whoſe ſtanding is in the Valley, would not think it too much to travel up the Hill to meet them: And if it be thought too much to ſtrive who ſhall *go before another in giving Honour*, (Rom. 12. 18.) yet if both ſorts that differ, would but go as far as they well may, both in reſpect of Conſcience and prudence, towards compounding the difference; how ſoon, and how eaſily might both ends be brought together, and the bond of Peace which hath been broken, be pieced again? To this end conſider, and lay to heart thoſe few things which I ſhall lay before you.

1. I ſhall commend to you the beſt pattern which you can imitate, and againſt which there can be no exception, and that is God himſelf; who though he be ſo infinitely above all, as to ſtand in no need of the Friendſhip of Men, yet out of the Infinite goodneſs of his Nature, *hath humbled himſelf*, not only *to behold the things on Earth*, but even to ſeek the recon-

reconciliation of his Enemies to himself, and to propose new and easie terms of Friendship, when the old had been violated. *God was in Christ reconciling the World unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them*, 2 Cor. 5. 19. And not to reconcile them to himself only, but also to one another in their common head and center of Union, Christ Jesus. *That in the dispensation of the fulness of time he might gather together in [one] all things in Christ, both which are in Heaven and which are on Earth*, Ephes. 1. 10. And to that end hath sent forth Ambassadours of Peace to beseech them to be reconciled to God, and to bring them all to the *Unity of the Faith, and knowledge of the Son of God*, Ephes. 4. 13. And how can we think our selves to be partakers of a Divine Nature, unless we find some resemblance of this goodness of God's Nature in our selves, inclining and disposing us to concord and good agreement with fellow-Christians, by removing out of the way all that unnecessarily hinders it. *Blessed are the Peace makers, for they shall be called the Children of God*, Mat. 5. 9. And why the Children of God? but because herein they resemble him who is the God of Peace, that loves Peace, and

ſeeks Peace, and delights to ſee Men deſigning it, and labouring at it, with heart, head, tongue, and hand. *Be ye therefore* one and all, *followers of God as dear Children, and walk in Love*, Eph. 5. 1, 2. *Be perfect, be of one mind, live in Peace, and the God of Love and Peace ſhall be with you*, 2 Cor. 13. 11. Can you be ambitious of any greater Honour than to be like God? A likeneſs to God is the higheſt Honour and perfection the Nature of any Creature is capable of: And to live in Love and Peace, and to ſeek Peace, and to be Peace-makers, is the way to be like him. *If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us*, 1 John 4. 12.

2. If you count it either matter of Honour or comfort to be of a temper like Chriſt, or if you think it will give you any confidence towards him for the preſent, and at his coming (as undoubtedly it will) then by this be perſwaded likewiſe to endeavour with all your might that the Unity of the Spirit may be kept in the bond of Peace. For the heart and Soul of Chriſt is exceedingly ſet upon Union and good agreement of all that believe in him: though they cannot all know alike and think alike in every thing, yet

yet for all that he is greatly deſirous they ſhould all hold together as one in Faith and Love. And therefore in that ſolemn Prayer of his to his Father, *John* 17. when he was leaving the World, he ſingles out this in ſpecial as the matter of his requeſt to his Father in one of the laſt Prayers he was to make in this World, *that they all might be one, and be perfected in one.* His heart and deſire was ſo full of this, and ſo ſet upon it, that he is at it over and over, mentioning it no leſs than four times in the ſame Prayer, *ver.* 11. 21, 22, 23. And why was his heart ſo much in this? Was it, think you, for himſelf, or for us? For his own ſake, or for ours? He deſired no greater thing for himſelf than to be *Glorified with the Glory he had with the Father before the World was*, before ever he entred upon his Mediatory Office, *ver.* 5. No, it was for us Men, and for our comfort and benefit that he ſo much deſired it, as knowing how much the Peace, comfort, and Edification of his People depended upon it; and how much the Converſion of the World depended on it, as neceſſary to make a right repreſentation of Chriſt to the World, that they might believe that the Father had ſent him.

And was his heart ſo much in it! And did he concern himſelf ſo much about it for our ſakes! And ſhall we our ſelves value it ſo little as to prefer little and inconſiderable things before it, and that rather for will and humour than any tie of Conſcience! O, God forbid. If we do, it is a ſign we do not yet well underſtand the things that belong to our peace, but that they are hid from our eyes.

And if Chriſt's heart was ſo much ſet upon the Unity and Concordance of his followers, we muſt needs think they are Men according to his own heart, that heartily deſign, deſire, and endeavour it too. And is not that honour enough? Which ſounds of moſt Honour to *David?* That he was a King? Or, that he *was a Man after God's own heart?* And who are like to be moſt dear unto Chriſt, but thoſe who are moſt like him, and make one heart with him?

The more you ſhall find your hearts run out to this thing, as Chriſt's did; the more you find your ſelves of his mind, ſpirit, and temper herein, the better aſſurance you will have (and the greater comfort in that aſſurance) of your dwelling in him, and he in you: *Hereby we know that we dwell in him, and*

he

he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit, 1 John 4. 13. *But if any Man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his*, Rom. 8. 9.

Truly if Men were but as forward to gratifie and please our Lord in this that is so pleasing to him, as they seem to be in some other things in which he never discovered himself to take any such pleasure, things would be quite at another pass among us. And yet if pleasing him be the business, and not somewhat else, why should not we be most for that in which he most delights?

3. Your Contentions and Divisions if you will still live in them, and maintain them, will hinder your Spiritual improvement, and keep you from thriving by the means of grace which you enjoy. It was a sad thing that St. *Paul* charged upon the *Corinthians*, viz. That *their coming together, and exercising* themselves in the Holy Ordinances of the Lord, *was not for the better, but for the worse*, 1 Cor. 11. 17. *Now in this that I declare unto you, I praise you not, that you come not together for the better, but for the worse.* But what was the cause of this, or upon what doth he ground this charge of their going backward in Religion? Verily it was

their Diviſions that was the cauſe of this miſchief. *For firſt of all*, ſaith he, *when you come together in the Church, I hear that there are diviſions among you*, ver. 18. That Church abounded in Spiritual gifts, *being enriched in every thing, in all utterance and all knowledge, ſo that they came behind in no gift*, Chap. 1. 5. 7. They thrived in theſe indeed: but then they went backward in their Humility and Charity, and goodneſs of their Spirit and temper, which made the Apoſtle to ſpend almoſt a whole Chapter in commending Charity above Spiritual gifts to them, beſides the ſeveral hints he gives of their being *puffed up*. Though they might well have been Spiritual Chriſtians, conſidering the opportunity and means they had to make them ſuch: yet becauſe of *Envying*, *Striſe*, and *Diviſions* among them, ſome following one Teacher, and ſome another in oppoſition; St. *Paul* could not (as he ſaith) *write to them as to Spiritual, but only as to Carnal*, ſuch as were but *Babes* ſtill, and unthriven in the Life and Spirit of Chriſtianity; their envying, ſtriſe, and diviſions, keeping them thus low under the means of higher attainments in grace, 1 *Cor.* 3. 1, 2, 3.

The truth is, Diviſions, Wranglings, and

and Janglings, and Contentions, eat out the very heart of Religion. Men may grow rich in a Form of knowledge, and expreſs a great zeal for the outſide of Religion, and yet in the mean time be languiſhing in the very vitals of Chriſtianity, when that knowledge and zeal is not improved and ſpent for the farthering of Peace and Love, with other Chriſtian Virtues. Your Diviſions and Contentions, Chriſtians, will be as a Worm at the root of your Tree, that will keep it from thriving, whatever coſt you otherwiſe beſtow upon it.

If then you have any mind to keep up Religion in heart among us, and not to have your Wine to become as Water, having loſt its Spirit: If you would have the Goſpel-Ordinances yield their increaſe, and your Religion not degenerate into Form: If you would yield the Lord the acceptable and pleaſant Fruit of all his coſt, and not ſuch as is ſtarvy, harſh, and unſavoury: If you would not *turn the Fruit of Righteouſneſs into Hemlock*: If you would be free from ſuch a diſtemper as will hinder your Spiritual reliſh, and convert your food to a noxious humour, and ſubject you to a ſpiritual languiſhing in the midſt of a plentiful proviſion

viſion for Spiritual health and growth; Then lay aſide your diviſions about matters of doubtful diſputation, and follow after the things which make for peace, and things whereby you may edifie one another in love.

What knowledge ſoever you have, and what zeal ſoever you expreſs for any truth as you conceive it to be, yet if while you hold faſt other things, you let go Charity, your knowledge of, and your zeal in proſecuting and promoting the ſame, though it were to the loſing of your life, will profit you nothing, 1 *Cor.* 13. 2, 3. *Though I underſtand all myſteries and all knowledge, and though I give my Body to be burned, and have not Charity, it profiteth me nothing.* A thing which nearly concerns all ſuch to mind, that are more careful and tender leſt ſome other controverted and ſuppoſed truth ſhould ſuffer, than Charity, Peace and Concord ſhould ſuffer; and care not what rents and diviſions they make, ſo they may but propagate their particular opinion. If there be bitter zeal (as ſome tranſlate it) glory not of thy knowledge, and lie not againſt the truth, in ſaying that's the way to promote it, *Jam.* 3. 14. If you would thrive under the means of grace indeed,

indeed, and be growing up to perfection, then be sure to be much for Charity and Unity. You have much talk of perfection among some, and many that pretend to it that are far from it, but I think it consists in nothing more next our love to God, than in the Saints Love and Unity. This is the cry of the Scripture: *That they be* [*perfect in one*] John 17. 23. *Be perfect, be of one mind, live in Peace,* 2 Cor. 13. 11. *Above all these put on Charity, which is the bond of perfectness,* Col. 3. 14. *If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is* [*perfected*] *in us,* 1 John 4. 12.

If some do grow in grace after they have fallen into dividing ways, and separating practises (as I am not so uncharitable, but to think that they do, while the errour lies not in their will, but in their judgment) yet this growth is not to be attributed at all to that wherein they differ from other good Christians, not of their way, who grow in grace too, but to those sound Principles of Christianity wherein both the one and the other are agreed. And I have good reason to think that the same improvement of those unquestionable Principles by which they grow in grace, their separation,

ration, notwithſtanding, would ſet them much forwarder in that growth, in caſe they were at Liberty from the intanglements of ſeparation, than under them it can: Becauſe thoſe ways of Diviſion and Separation, do Naturally tend to narrow Mens Spirits and Charity, and to cauſe them to think that many are not of the Church of Chriſt, which indeed are: and to have low thoughts of many, that yet are highly eminent in the Church for their worth and Service; and all becauſe they are not of their way: and beſides, through prejudice they deprive themſelves of many happy advantages of Spiritual growth, which otherwiſe they would make uſe of. And thoſe that abound moſt in a well-grounded and regular Charity, have, doubtleſs, the more of God's preſence and aſſiſtance with them for their Spiritual growth and comfort too, as others for want of it, have the leſs. *If he that dwelleth in Love dwelleth in God, and God in him* (1 Joh. 4. 16.) then thoſe that abound moſt in Love, muſt needs have moſt of God's preſence, both to aſſiſt, quicken, and comfort them. *Live in Peace, and the God of Love and Peace ſhall be with you*, to increaſe theſe and to help you to propagate them

(2 *Cor.*

(2 *Cor.* 13. 11.) and to give you great Peace in so doing, as some have found by Experience.

But though the ways of separation among us, do but as the Rickets, hinder some in their growth, and not totally deprive them of it, yet it is to be feared they make some others much worse than they were before they came in to them: more goodly and self-conceited, more proud and imperious, slighting and despising others that are much better than themselves, and over-valuing themselves quite upon account of the Form and Church they are got into: and more uncharitable in censuring others as carnal, as time-servers, as Men of the World, only because of the National way, and not of theirs, though otherwise never so worthy. Many of these are growing indeed, but it is farther and farther into separation, till at last they commence *Quakers*.

4. If you prize your comfort, prize harmony and good agreement, not among this or that sort or party only, but among all that do agree in things of absolute necessity to Salvation to all. For those that are living, and not dead or benumb'd Members of Christ's Body, cannot

cannot but be pained with the rending of one Member of that Body from another. *If one Member ſuffer, all the Members ſuffer with it*, 1 Cor. 12. 26. Was it not a ſad ſight to ſee the Man, in *Mar.* 5. 5. cutting himſelf with ſtones? And an Argument that he was poſſeſſed with an evil Spirit? And I pray you how much leſs doleful is it to ſee the People of God, Members of the ſame Body, cutting and wounding themſelves? For ſo they do when they cut and wound one another: *For they are Members one of another*, Rom. 12. 5. Alas, how unnatural is this! *For no Man yet ever hated his own fleſh.* Certainly where thus it is, they are under a Spiritual phrenzy and madneſs, and are objects of very great commiſeration as well as occaſions of great trouble and diſturbance in the Church of God. But, O the *Comfort of Love* (as the Apoſtle phraſeth it, *Phil.* 2. 1.) and the pleaſantneſs of Peace, and the delight of harmony, which is like a well-tuned Inſtrument where there is no jarring. *Behold how good and pleaſant a thing it is for Brethren to dwell together in Unity!* Pſal. 133. 1. A great part of the comfort of a Chriſtian in this World, lies in his Communion with Saints: *David*

vid said, *the Saints and excellent were all his delight*, Psal. 16. 3. And therefore a breach in this, must needs make a breach in a Christians comfort.

5. The Christian cause and interest in the World, calls loudly upon all such as would approve themselves to have any Love for it, or to be any Friends to it, and not betrayers of it, to Unite, and to close up the Divisions that are among us, and not to persist in separating practises, or to do any thing that contributes thereto, but the contrary. One great means of facilitating the belief of the Gospel, and of propagating the Christian Religion, and of bringing it into reputation in the World, is the Union and good agreement of all Christ's followers. And therefore he prayed so earnestly, as we heard before, *that they all might be one, as he and the Father are one, that they also might be perfect in one*, and all for this end, *that the World might believe that the Father had sent him*, Joh. 17. 20, 21. That Men might believe that he came from God indeed, and that he was no Impostor, but that his Gospel is the infallible Truth, and that Religion which is taught thereby, is the only true Religion. For Christ's followers are those by whom the Gospel is upheld in the

the World, and held forth and witneſſed to the World: *They hold forth the Word of Life* (Phil. 2. 16.) *they are the Pillar and ground of the Truth*, 1 Tim. 3. 15. And the more unanimous theſe are in judgment, affection, and teſtimony, the ſtronger and more authentick will their teſtimony be, and the more Men will be drawn to conſider it, and to lay to heart the import of it. But the more they are divided about it, the more this Goſpel, this Religion, comes under ſuſpicion in the minds of many: and from their differing about leſſer things, the ignorant, the weak, and unbelieving, will draw arguments of ſuſpicion and heſitation about the greater, and be ready to conclude the uncertainty of the whole, by their differing about a part; eſpecially when their difference riſes ſo high, and becomes ſo notorious and publick, as it does when they ſeparate about it. This is lamentably experienced, not only in the continued infidelity of Jews and Turks, but alſo in that Atheiſm and Scepticiſm, which hath ſo exceedingly increaſed upon us ſince theſe ſad times of Diviſion and Separation among us. Our Diviſions unſettle the minds, unhinge and diſtract the Souls of many, that they know not whom to follow, or where to fix: and by this means

means they are exposed to be practised upon by seducers, and carried away. Your Divisions encourage seducers, and the Adversaries of our Reformed Religion in their designs against you, and invite them to attempt upon you; So that as long as you keep up your Divisions, they will make an advantage of it, grow upon you, and get ground, and by little and little draw away your strength; and in conclusion, over-master you, if by Uniting, you prevent them not. Your Adversaries know the meaning of *divide them in* Jacob, *and scatter them in* Israel, if you do not; and of those words, *A Kingdom divided against it self, cannot stand.* It hath been, no doubt, their practice by all the artifice they could, to raise and foment your Divisions, as it is still to continue and increase them, as designing ruine to the Protestant interest thereby. And will you gratifie them herein? And become their Instruments to accomplish your own destruction and the destruction of that cause and interest which should be more dear to you than your Lives? God forbid. And therefore let no lesser interests of worldly advantage, be it profit, be it honour among Men, or reputation among a party, tempt you to betray this greater interest of your

Lord and Maſter, of Religion, and of your Souls. Be not herein penny wiſe, and pound fooliſh. Revive not that complaint, *Phil.* 2. 21. *All ſeek their own, not the things of Jeſus Chriſt.* Expoſe not Religion to loſs and dammage in the main, and in the ſubſtance of it, by being too tenacious of mutable Circumſtances. Be not ſo concerned for your Cabbin, as to expoſe the Ship to ſinking through your neglect.

I have now done: Only remember, I pray you, that the things wherein the divided parties profeſſedly agree, are ſuch as carry in them the main of Chriſtianity, and will make good Chriſtians indeed, if lived up to. Whereas the things upon which we divide, are but diſputable opinions, the beſt of which on the one ſide or the other, will never make a good Chriſtian without the other. And you know what account God made of Men's zeal though it were for his own inſtitutions, as among the Jews of old, when they were greatly guilty of ſins againſt Charity. Though Men be never ſo Orthodox in, and zealous for their opinions, yet if they have not Charity, they are but as ſounding braſs, or a tinkling Cymbal. A wiſe Man will not therefore value himſelf by that which is proper to ſuch or ſuch a party,

party, but by that Charity, Humility, and Sobriety of mind with other graces, which are common to those that are good indeed, in each party: and by these he will value any man of what party soever, and how different soever from himself in by-opinions. If those of each party then would but steer by this compass, and proportion their zeal to the Nature of things, labouring more to lessen differences, to make peace, and to recover Charity, than to propagate those things which as they are more uncertain, so at best are less acceptable to God, and less profitable unto Men; and, consequently, less attractive of their zeal; I should not doubt but that in a little time, things would be at a much better pass in the Church of God, than for the present we see them to be.

POSTSCRIPT.

THere is great reaſon to think that many of the Non-Conformiſts do hold it Lawful for Perſons in the capacity of private Members to join in Parochial Communion, who yet do not do ſo themſelves. The five diſſenting Brethren that lived in ſeparation from Parochial Communion, yet did in their Apologetical Narration profeſs before God and the World, *that all that conſcience of defilement they conceived cleaved to our Pariſh-Churches, or of the unwarrantable power of Church-Governours exerciſed therein, did never work in them any other thought, much leſs opinion, but that multitudes of the Pariſh Congregations were the true Churches and Body of Chriſt, and the Miniſtry thereof a true Miniſtry.* And I have no reaſon to doubt but that very many of the preſent Non-Conformiſts that never went ſo far as thoſe, are of the ſame opinion, who yet live not in communion with thoſe Pariſh-Churches, though they live among them. And I cannot but wonder that the ſenſe they muſt needs have of the ill tendency of our Diviſions, and of the deſirableneſs of Peace and Unity, ſhould not deter them from

from making, or keeping the breach wider than needs, wider than the necessity of not sinning, puts them upon. For it cannot be denied, but that it is a duty incumbent upon Christians, and becoming all that love and long for Peace and Unity in the Church, to go as far as ever a good Conscience will carry them towards the lessening of our differences, and closing up the breach among us.

They cannot but know as well as all other men, that to break Church-Communion and rend the Church, where men are not necessitated to do so or to sin, is Schism. And I must needs say they put the Charity of their Friends hard to it, not to think they condemn by their practice, what they allow in their judgment, while by separation they break the Unity of the Church, which according to their own judgment, they might forbear to do without sin.

If they think their concession touching the Lawfulness of Lay-Communion with our Parish-Churches will free them from the guilt of Schism, though they themselves keep in no such Communion, I may well pray them to consider, whether that very thing doth not render their Schism in some respect more criminal than theirs who separate as accounting our Churches no true Churches;

Churches; since it seems to proceed more from errour in the will (which is errour of the worst kind) than Schism in the others doth; and since their judgment and practice seem more to enterfere, and to render them self-condemned in their way. When *Peter* knew that the difference between the believing Jews and the believing Gentiles was no sufficient ground of separation between them, and yet did withdraw and separate himself from the believing Gentiles, for fear of displeasing the believing Jews; St. *Paul withstood him to his face, because he was worthy to be blamed*, and so much the rather, because he drew *Barnabas* and other Christians into *the same dissimulation* with himself, *Gal.* 2. 11, 12, 13.

These things considered, One would think they should apprehend it far more safe, and less scandalous, and more conducible to Peace, Unity, and Love, and a more regular way of obtaining the removal of burthens, for those Non-Conforming Ministers that can, to maintain Communion as private Members with the Parishes, and to perswade their hearers to do so too.

FINIS.

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